Photo from 1951's Film



Blanche as portrayed by Vivian Leigh (left) and Stanley as portrayed by Marlon Brando (right)

Key

Shortened terms:
TW - Tennessee / Tenacity Williams
ASND and/or Streetcar - A Streetcar Named Desire

Author Context

Author: Tennessee Williams
- TW's **father was a travelling salesman. He treated his wife and children poorly**, "bullying" them when he got home.
- TW **had diphtheria**, a highly contagious infection that affects the nose and throat, and sometimes the skin, it can be a serious illness and sometimes fatal, especially in children, if it's not treated quickly. This affected his ability to leave home.
- **Shakespeare and Dickins are authors that TW was introduced to early on by his mother.**
- **He and his sister, Rose Williams, were inseparable from each other.**
- Tom eventually enrolled in the military, but **after leaving training, his father felt enraged.**
- Early in her life, **TW's sister was committed to a mental hospital.** TW's guilty and loving **relationship with his sister haunted his life and influenced his writing** (as we will come to see represented in Blanche, and other characters of his plays).

Author Context (cont)

- Eventually, **TW's literary agent (Aubrey Wood) convinced TW to move to New York.**
- When TW's play **The Glass Menagerie came out, critics reviewed and praised it as a masterpiece.**
- After TW wrote ASND, **Elia Kazan was signed on as its director because she was convinced by the play's power and TW's reputation.**
- TW's brother, Dakin, describes the **audience's reaction to ASND's stage performance as quiet, in a stunned way.**
- The **audience gave TW a standing ovation for ASND.**
- When TW was **asked about the complex nature of Blanche's character, TW responded that "people are complex".**
- ASND won many awards, including the **Pulitzer Prize award**.
- TW reacted to ASND's enormous success with newfound pressure to try and create more plays to the same standard as Streetcar.
- When he wrote **Camino Real (1953), it was received by critics as a commercial flop-** this affected his mental health greatly, and **many thought Tennessee William's time in the sun had passed with ASND.**
- TW was often nicknamed **Tenacity Williams, 'Tenacity' meaning 'working hard'.**
- TW was a **gay writer who had moved to New Orleans as historically, it was more accepting of races and sexuality.**
- TW's psychiatrist, as a response to his declining mental health, **suggested that TW should "stop being gay" to feel better.**
- Just in his 50s, **TW started to wash huge amounts of sleeping pills down with wine or gin, where he was subsequently diagnosed with drug poisoning.**

Author Context (cont)

- TW **became very paranoid, aggressive and defensive, and started using aggression against his close friends in his life, including Aubrey Wood.**
- He **died on the 24th February (age 71)**, it was claimed he had **choked on a small plastic tab** from a bottle, but his **brother has stated that he believes he was murdered.**
- Many suspect it **could also have been overdosing or suicide.**

Plot Summary

Scene 1
- Blanche arrives at New Orleans, Eunice allows Blanche into Stanley and Stella's two-room apartment. We are introduced to Blanche's implied alcoholism, and also her classism.
- Blanche and Stella reunite, and Blanche is left alone with Stanley for a time whilst Blanche is in the bathroom. Stanley and Blanche speak in small-talk, immediate tension between the two as Blanche is confronted about her ex-husband.

Scene 2
- Stella explains to Stanley that she is going to take Blanche out that night to avoid the company of Stanley's poker buddies, and asks Stanley to be kind to Blanche by flattering her appearance.
- Stanley is interested in the bill of sale from Belle Reve- Stanley is suspicious of theft on Blanche's part and attempts to victimise himself in accordance to the "Napoleonic Code", which is a French rule that places women's property in the hands of their husbands.

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Plot Summary (cont)

- Stanley angrily pulls out of Blanche's belongings in search for the receipts, and comments on all of Blanche's "expensive" outfits (which we know later are all just costume with little cost). Stella storms out to the porch in response to Stanley's actions and ignorance.
- Blanche finishes appears before Stanley wearing a red satin robe. She closes the curtains to the bedroom in order to dress out of Stanley's sight. She unashamedly asks him to come fasten her buttons, and he refuses. He begins to question sarcastically how Blanche had acquired such "expensive" clothes, and rejects Blanche's flirtatious bids. Blanche calls to her sister and requests her to buy her a soda.
- Blanche finds the receipts and hands them to Stanley, whom snatches additional papers from her trunks and begins to read them. Blanche is horrified and grabs back the second set of papers, which are old love letters and poems she saved from her husband. She redirects Stanley's attention to the original papers and Stanley realises Blanche had acted honestly- the estate really was lost on its mortgage and not sold.
- Blanche explains the estate's decline followed after the men mishandled affairs with their "epic fornications". Stanley accidentally lets slip that Stella is pregnant, something Stella had told him to keep quiet about to Blanche.

Plot Summary (cont)

- Stella returns from the drugstore and the men arrive for their poker game. Blanche is exhilarated by the news of Stella's pregnancy and follows Stella for their girls' night out. On their way off-stage, Blanche comments that mixing their old, aristocratic blood with Stanley's immigrant blood may be the only way to insure the survival of their lineage in the world.

Scene 3 - The Poker Night

- The poker night (the original title of the play). A scene of masculinity. We are introduced to (most importantly) Mitch, and Steve and Pablo.
- Stella and Blanche return from their girls' night. The men show no interest in Blanche's presence.
- Stella asserts that it's time to stop playing for the night, Stanley refuses her request.
- Mitch emerges into the bedroom from the bathroom and is sheepish and awkward upon meeting Blanche, indicating he is attracted to her.
- Blanche remarks that there is something "superior to the others" in Mitch, Stella agrees that Mitch is polite but claims that Stanley is the only one of them who will "get anywhere".
- Blanche turns on the radio and begins to dance. She attempts to engage Mitch and prevent his leave to the bathroom. Stanley rushes up to the radio and hurls it out the window.
- Stella yells at Stanley, and he advances violently toward her. He follows her as she runs offstage, and the stage directions call for sounds of him beating her. The other men pull him off. Stella cries out that she wants to get away, and Blanche scrambles to gather clothes and take Stella upstairs to Eunice's apartment. Mitch condemns Stanley's behaviour to Blanche.

Plot Summary (cont)

Then the men attempt to revive the now limp and confused Stanley, but when they try to force him into the shower to sober him up, he fights them off. They grab their poker winnings and leave.. - Stanley stumbles out of the bedroom, calling for Stella. Eunice won't let him speak to Stella. However, Stella slips out of the apartment and down to where Stanley is. They stare at each other and then rush together with "animal moans". He falls to his knees, tenderly caresses her face and belly, then lifts her up and carried her into their flat.
- Blanche emerges from Eunice's flat. Mitch returns and tells her not to worry because Stella and Stanley are crazy about each other. He offers her a cigarette. She thanks him for his kindness.

Scene 4

- Morning after the poker night. Blanche sees Stella alone and rushes to her, she does not understand how Stella could've returned to Stanley last night.
- Blanche attempts to think of ways to get them both out of this situation, but Stella insists that she doesn't want to leave. Blanche remembers an old boyfriend called Shep Huntleigh. She plans to contact him to see if he can help her out of her situation, she tells Stella she only has 65 cents to her name, but she feels that after what happened last night she can't live under the same room as Stanley.
- Stella tries to explain that Stanley was at his worst last night. Stanley enters the room unheard by Blanche, as she asks to "speak plainly". Blanche states that Stanley is common and bestial, his animal habits make him a "survivor of the Stone Age".

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Plot Summary (cont)

She pleads with Stella to remember some of the advances of civilization and not to "hang back with the brutes". At this point, Stanley leaves quietly and calls from outside- when he comes in, Stella throws himself into his arms. This is when Stanley realises he's "won", and animalistically grins at Blanche from over Stella's shoulder during the embrace.. **Scene 5**

- It is 3 months into Blanche's stay. She had finished composing a letter to Shep Huntleigh and knowingly lies to him. Stanley comes in and is irritated, he is antagonistic toward Blanche. She asks what star sign he was born under, he is Capricorn (goat) and Blanche is virgo (virgin). Stanley asks if Blanche knows a man called Shaw who had known Blanche in the Hotel Flamingo back in Laurel. Blanche assures Stanley she never would've been seen at Flamingo.
- Blanche wonders if Stella had heard some unkind gossip about her. She explains that in the last few years after she began losing Belle Reve she was too soft and not strong enough, and there were some stories told about her. Stella brings a coke and tells her to stop talking morbidly. She begins to shake as promising she will leave before Stanley pitches her out, and causes her coke to foam and spill on her dress.
- Blanche says she is only nervous because Mitch is coming at seven for a date. She tells Stella she has created an illusion with Mitch that she is all prim and proper, and lied about her age because she wants Mitch to want her. Stella asks Blanche if she is interested in Mitch- she states she wants to rest.
- A young man comes to the door after Stella makes her exit, he is collecting for the paper .He is about to leave when Blanche tells him she has no money, but she calls him back and asks for a light.

Plot Summary (cont)

She then asks him about the rain and what he did when it rained. He told her that he went in the drug store and had a cherry soda. He tries to leave again but Blanche stops him, telling him how handsome he looks and then she walks over and kisses him. She sends him away, saying that she must keep her hands off children (oh god). A few minutes later Mitch appears with a bunch of roses.. **Scene 6**

- Later that evening, Blanche and Mitch return rather late from a date. They are discussing the failure of the evening. Blanche takes the blame for it as it's the lady's duty to "entertain the gentleman". Mitch asks her permission to kiss her goodnight, Blanche tells him he should not have to ask, but warns him that he is to go no further because a single girl has to be careful.
- Stanley and Stella are not at home and Blanche invites Mitch for a nightcap. She looks for whiskey, lights a candle and says in French that she is the lady of the camellias. Mitch says he doesn't understand French. She asks him to take off his coat but he is ashamed of the way he sweats. Blanche maintains that he is just a good healthy man.
- Mitch suggests they, Stella and Stanley should go out together sometimes. Blanche explains to Mitch how Stanley hates her and wonders if he has told Mitch anything. Mitch pretends he hasn't heard anything, but Blanche feels uneasy. She states "that man will destroy me".

Plot Summary (cont)

- Mitch suddenly asks Blanche how old she is, to which she wonders why. Mitch tells her that he has talked about her to his mother. Blanche wonders if Mitch won't be very lonely when he loses his mother. She explains that she knows what loneliness is because she once lost a person she loved. She tells Mitch about Allan, and tells the truth of what happened- that he shot himself after Blanche called him "disgusting" for sleeping with another man.
- Mitch responds that they both need somebody. The polka tune stops, and she and Mitch embrace.

Scene 7

- A few weeks later, Stanley comes home to find that Blanche is "soaking in a hot tub" even though it is blistering hot outside. It's Blanche's birthday and Stella has prepared a small party. Stanley makes Stella stop working and listen to what he has found out about Blanche; a notorious reputation in Laurel, a reputation so wild that Hotel Flamingo asked her to move out. The army deemed Blanche as "out-of-bounds" and she was kicked out of her job for being "-mixed up" with a seventeen-year-old boy.. - Blanche interrupts conversation (unknowing of the topic being herself) by calling for a towel. She notices a strange expression on Stella's face; she is assured that all is well. Stella attempts to explain to Stanley that Blanche's early life was fraught with tragedy due to Allan and wasn't able to recover completely- Stanley states he isn't interested in "old history"; he is only concerned with the present.
- When Stanley notices the birthday cake, he wonders if company is expected.

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Plot Summary (cont)

He explains that Mitch won't be over because he had told him everything. Stella is shocked and cries out that Blanche thought Mitch was going to marry her. Stanley corrects her by informing her that Mitch is not necessarily through with Blanche but he certainly isn't going to marry her. He also mentions he bought Blanche a bus ticket for next Tuesday and that she has to leave. Stella protests, but Stanley is firm. He thinks that Blanche's future is "-mapped out for her". He screams for Blanche to come out of the bathroom so that he can get in- when she emerges, she notices something has happened and is frightened.. **Scene 8**

- Later that evening, Blanche, Stella and Stanley are finishing with Blanche's birthday party. She cannot understand why Mitch has not shown up. She tries to tell a joke, but no one laughs. Stells says Stanley is "too busy making a pig of himself" and tells him to go wash and help her clear the table.
- Stanley explodes in anger, throws his plate to the floor and warns Stella never to use such words to him again, that is "king around here". As he leaves, Blanche demands to know what has happened. She plans on calling Mitch, Stella asks her not to. She calls anyway, but Mitch doesn't pick up.

Plot Summary (cont)

- Stella prepares to light the birthday candles whilst Stanley is complaining about the steam from the bath. The phone rings and when Stanley returns from answering it, he tells Blanche that he has a birthday gift for her. She is surprised and happy until she opens it and sees the bus ticket back to Laurel on Tuesday's bus. The polka music begins to play as Blanche is unable to do anything except flee from the room.
- Stella doesn't understand why Stanley treated Blanche so brutally, especially since Blanche is so tender and delicate. In the light of Blanche's past experiences, Stanley refuses to believe that she is very delicate.
- Stanley reminds her that he was common when they first met and she loved it, especially at nights. He tells Stella that they will be happy again after Blanche leaves. Suddenly, due to the shock of the evening, Stella tells Stanley to take her to the hospital- her water has broke.

Scene 9

- Later that evening, Blanche is alone in the apartment. The doorbell startles her. It is Mitch, who is still dressed in his working clothes and who is unshaven. Blanche pretends surprise but says she is glad to see him because he has stopped the polka music that was spinning in her head.
- Blanche knows that something is wrong, but she says she will not "cross-examine" the witness. Mitch keeps trying to say something, but Blanche continues babbling. When Blanche offers him some liquor, he tells her that Stanley told him that she had been lapping it up all summer

Plot Summary (cont)

- He then says it is dark and wonders why Blanche has never gone out with him in the daytime. Mitch wants to turn on the lights, but Blanche pleads with him not to. She doesn't want light and truth; she wants magic and illusion. But Mitch jerks the lantern off the light and forces Blanche under it. He notices that she is older than he had supposed, but he could have accepted that if she had been straight with him.
- He tells Blanche about the stories he has heard and how he checked them out and three people swore to them. When Mitch mentions the Flamingo, Blanche drops her pose and tells how after the death of her young husband, there was nothing to fill the void except intimacies with strangers.
- Mitch accuses her of lying to him. She says that she never lied in her heart. At this time, a street vendor passes by selling flowers for the dead. When Blanche hears the vendor, she thinks of all the deaths she has had to suffer, and that the opposite of death is desire.
- She even tells Mitch about her escapades with the Army camp which was near her house. Suddenly, Mitch puts his arms around her and demands what he has been missing all summer. She requests marriage. Mitch tells her she is not good enough. Blanche orders him to leave or she will start screaming. As he remains staring, she runs to the window and begins to scream "Fire", wildly. Mitch stumbles out.

Scene 10

- Later that evening, Blanche is dressed in an old, faded gown and has a rhinestone tiara on her head. She has been drinking heavily. She is talking to herself when Stanley enters.

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Plot Summary (cont)

- He tells her that the baby won't come before morning, and the doctors sent him home. He wonders about the outfit that Blanche has on. She tells him a fabulous story about how she just received an invitation for a cruise in the Caribbean with a Mr. Shep Huntleigh. Stanley drinks some beer and gets out the silk pyjamas which he wore on his wedding night. Blanche thinks how wonderful it will be to have some privacy again and to be among something other than swine.
- Blanche tells Stanley how Mitch came to her, imploring her forgiveness, but she sent him away because "deliberate cruelty is not forgivable." Then Stanley attacks her, telling her she is lying and that she has no invitation. Blanche flees to the telephone trying to reach Shep Huntleigh, but she can't seem to compose a message.
- She leaves the phone to get the address. Stanley replaces the phone on the hook. Blanche wants him to stand aside so she can pass, and Stanley thinks that it might not be too bad to interfere with her. As he advances toward her, Blanche breaks a bottle so as "to twist the broken end in your face." He springs on her as she sinks to the floor. He picks up her inert body and carries it into the bedroom.

Scene 11

- Several weeks later, Stella is seen packing some of Blanche's things. There is another poker party going on. This time, Stanley is winning. Eunice comes in to help with the packing. Stella wonders if she is doing the right thing by sending Blanche to the state institution. Stella tells Eunice that she couldn't continue to live with Stanley if she believed Blanche's story. Eunice assures Stella that she is doing the only sensible thing.

Plot Summary (cont)

- Blanche comes from the bathroom, and she possesses a "hysterical vivacity." She wonders if she has received a call. Blanche speaks suddenly with a hysteria demanding to know what is going on. She feels trapped and wants to get out of the trap. Stella and Eunice help her get dressed. Blanche eats some unwashed grapes and thinks that she would like to die somewhere on the sea from eating unwashed grapes and be buried in a clean white sack.
- The doctor and a matron from the state institution arrive to pick up Blanche. Eunice announces that "someone is calling for Blanche." Blanche is ready to go but doesn't want to pass through the room where the men are playing poker. When she sees the doctor, she panics and tries to run. Stanley blocks her way, and along with the matron, advances toward her.
- Stanley assures her that she left nothing here but the paper lantern which he tears off the light bulb and hands to Blanche. As Blanche screams and tries to break away, Stella runs out on the porch where Eunice tries to comfort her. Meanwhile, the matron pins Blanche down. The doctor advances and speaks quietly and softly to Blanche. She responds to his quietness and says that she has "always depended on the kindness of strangers." The doctor leads her out and Stanley comes to comfort Stella by fondling her breasts..

Summary of the play, some notes are shortened down or copied from Sparknotes and CliffsNotes.

Characters

Blanche DuBois

Blanche is Stella's older sister, who was a high school English teacher in Laurel, Mississippi, until she was forced to leave her post.

Blanche is an eccentric, fragile woman around the age of thirty. After losing Belle Reve, the DuBois family home, Blanche arrives in New Orleans at the Kowalski apartment and eventually reveals that she is completely destitute. Though she has strong sexual urges and has had many lovers, she puts on the airs of a woman who has never known indignity. She avoids reality, preferring to live in her own imagination. As the play progresses, Blanche's instability grows along with her misfortune. Stanley sees through Blanche and finds out the details of her past, destroying her relationship with his friend Mitch. Stanley also destroys what's left of Blanche by raping her and then having her committed to an insane asylum.. *A list of interesting quotes:*

"Whoever you are, I have always depended on the kindness of strangers."

"But some things are not forgivable. Deliberate cruelty is not forgivable! It is the one unforgivable thing, in my opinion, and the one thing of which I have never, never been guilty."

"I know I fib a good deal. After all, a woman's charm is 50% illusion."

"Why, they told me to take a streetcar named Desire and then transfer to one called Cemetery and ride six blocks and get off at Elysian Fields."

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Characters (cont)

"You're married to a madman. [Stella talks] What you are talking about is desire - just brutal Desire. The name of that rattle-trap streetcar that bangs through the Quarter, up one old narrow street and down another."
"May I speak plainly?... If you'll forgive me, he's common... He's like an animal. He has an animal's habits. There's even something subhuman about him. Thousands of years have passed him right by, and there he is. Stanley Kowalski, survivor of the Stone Age, bearing the raw meat home from the kill in the jungle. And you - you here waiting for him. Maybe he'll strike you or maybe grunt and kiss you, that's if kisses have been discovered yet. His poker night you call it. This party of apes."
"Marry me, Mitch"
"I can't stand a naked light bulb, any more than I can a rude remark or a vulgar action."
"I'm very adaptable to circumstances"
"Tarantula was the name of it. I stayed at a hotel called the Tarantula Arms. [...] Yes, a big spider. That's where I brought my victims. Yes, I've had many meetings with strangers."
"I've got to be near you, Stella. I've got to be with people. I can't be alone because... Because as you must have noticed, I... I'm not very well."
^Blanche explains to Stella that she cannot stay in a hotel because she can't bear to be alone. This is closer to the truth than the reason Blanche tells herself, that she needs to stay with Stella because she is out of money. The audience comes to understand many of Blanche's actions are driven by her extreme loneliness. Stella notices that Blanche is agitated and overwrought, and Blanche makes numerous references to her nerves.

Characters (cont)

In addition, Blanche's attraction to Mitch is mainly motivated by the desire to not be alone rather than an interest in him in particular.^. "I - I - I took the blows... on my face and my body. All of those deaths, the long parade to the graveyard. Father, Mother, Margaret, that dreadful way... You just came home in time for funerals, Stella. And funerals are pretty compared to deaths. How do you think all that sickness and dying was paid for? Death is expensive, Miss Stella. And I, with my pitiful salary at the school... Yes, accuse me. Stand there and stare at me, thinking I let the place go. I let the place go? Where were you? In there with your Polack.".
Further analysis
^When the play begins, Blanche is already a fallen woman in society's eyes. Her family fortune and estate are gone, she lost her young husband to suicide years earlier, and she is a social pariah due to her indiscrete sexual behavior. She also has a bad drinking problem, which she covers up poorly. Behind her veneer of social snobbery and sexual propriety, Blanche is an insecure, dislocated individual. She is an aging Southern belle who lives in a state of perpetual panic about her fading beauty. Her manner is dainty and frail, and she sports a wardrobe of showy but cheap evening clothes. Stanley quickly sees through Blanche's act and seeks out information about her past.^. ^In the Kowalski household, Blanche pretends to be a woman who has never known indignity.

Characters (cont)

Her false propriety is not simply snobbery, however; it constitutes a calculated attempt to make herself appear attractive to new male suitors. Blanche depends on male sexual admiration for her sense of self-esteem, which means that she has often succumbed to passion. By marrying, Blanche hopes to escape poverty and the bad reputation that haunts her. But because the chivalric Southern gentleman savior and caretaker (represented by Shep Huntleigh) she hopes will rescue her is extinct, Blanche is left with no realistic possibility of future happiness. As Blanche sees it, Mitch is her only chance for contentment, even though he is far from her ideal.^. ^Stanley's relentless persecution of Blanche foils her pursuit of Mitch as well as her attempts to shield herself from the harsh truth of her situation. The play chronicles the subsequent crumbling of Blanche's self-image and sanity. Stanley himself takes the final stabs at Blanche, destroying the remainder of her sexual and mental esteem by raping her and then committing her to an insane asylum. In the end, Blanche blindly allows herself to be led away by a kind doctor, ignoring her sister's cries. This final image is the sad culmination of Blanche's vanity and total dependence upon men for happiness.^. **Stella Kowalski**
Blanche's younger sister, about twenty-five years old and of a mild disposition that visibly sets her apart from her more vulgar neighbours.

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Characters (cont)

Stella possesses the same timeworn aristocratic heritage as Blanche, but she jumped the sinking ship in her late teens and left Mississippi for New Orleans. There, Stella married lower-class Stanley, with whom she shares a robust sexual relationship. Stella's union with Stanley is both animal and spiritual, violent but renewing. After Blanche's arrival, Stella is torn between her sister and her husband. Eventually, she stands by Stanley, perhaps in part because she gives birth to his child near the play's end. While she loves and pities Blanche, she cannot bring herself to believe Blanche's accusations that Stanley dislikes Blanche, and she eventually dismisses Blanche's claim that Stanley raped her. Stella's denial of reality at the play's end shows that she has more in common with her sister than she thinks.. *A list of interesting quotes:*

"You never did give me a chance to say much, Blanche. So I just got in the habit of being quiet around you"

In Scene One, Stella honestly shares her experience growing up with Blanche on the plantation called Belle Reve. In fact, Stella is always honest with Blanche. The personalities of Stella and Blanche are in sharp contrast with each other throughout the play. Blanche, the more talkative of the two, is the sister of words, while Stella is the sister of action.

"I'm going to try to keep Blanche out till the party breaks up because I don't know how she would take it. So we'll go out to one of the little places in the Quarter afterwards and you'd better give me some money."

Characters (cont)

Stella is trying to protect her fragile sister from the roughness of the night's poker game. She's taking her out to dinner and then to a show. Stanley is not happy about it because he has to eat a cold dinner alone. He is already beginning to resent Blanche's presence in their household and doesn't trust her delicate persona.

"This is my house and I'll talk as much as I want to!"

In a rare moment of dominance, Stella reminds her husband that he can't tell her what or what not to do. Stanley has just ordered Stella and Blanche to stop talking while the men play poker, but Stella makes clear that she is her own boss in her own home.

"He didn't know what he was doing . . . He was as good as a lamb when I came back and he's really very, very ashamed of himself."

Stella makes excuses for Stanley's abusive behavior the night before as she talks to Blanche. Blanche criticizes her for returning home and sleeping with Stanley after such violent behavior. For Stella as for Stanley, the line between sexuality and physical violence blurs and Stella admits that Stanley has always been volatile. Blanche acts appalled but secretly feels attracted. As usual, her reaction is dramatic but dishonest.

"You take it for granted that I am in something that I want to get out of."

Characters (cont)

Stella says this more than once to Blanche when Blanche suggests that they need to find a way to "get us both out." This is the main point of contention between the sisters. Blanche considers Stella's life and marriage intolerable or pretends to. Stella defends and clings to her marriage. She is satisfied with her home and her marriage, no matter how both appear to others. Stella is comfortable in her own skin and life, while Blanche is not.

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

Stella defends her relationship with Stanley as she argues with Blanche. Blanche has just suggested that Stella fell in love with Stanley in uniform but fails to look at the reality of what he truly is: a violent brute. Stella, like her husband, is driven by her sexuality and considers it paramount to a good life and a good marriage. These lines reveal Stella's true feelings and explain her loyalty in the face of physical abuse.

"What have I done to my sister? Oh, God, what have I done to my sister?"

These are among Stella's final words in the play, spoken to Eunice as the doctor and matron lead Blanche out of the apartment to be taken to a mental institution. She is afraid that her and Stanley's actions are hurting Blanche and feels responsible for the mental breakdown her sister has experienced.

Further analysis

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Characters (cont)

Stella is Blanche's younger sister, but in many ways, she behaves like the elder of the two. Stella appears more grounded, more tolerant, and less sensitive than Blanche; she also seems to be a natural nurturer who "enjoys waiting on" and doing things for her sister. Stella performs kind acts for others, such as sending Mitch's sick mother a custard. Even before she becomes a mother, Stella is maternal.

^Despite their differences, Stella still has much in common with her sister. Like Blanche, Stella has refined tastes and sensibilities, poking gentle fun at Stanley's poker buddies and disliking Stanley's pawing her in front of people. Also like Blanche, Stella can be deceitful when it suits her, admitting, "I glossed things over in my letters," and not telling Stanley of Blanche's arrival. Most of all, like Blanche, Stella is a sensual being. She may have found Stanley "common" when they first met, but she now has a strong visceral and physical connection to him that borders on the obsessive.^. ^However, the nature of Stella's carnal appetite differs from her sister's. Stella's sexual drive is centered on attraction to and love for one individual (Stanley), as opposed to Blanche, whose fleeting encounters with soldiers and traveling salesmen suggests she craves sexual attention in general—especially from young men, stand-ins for her lost, young husband. Also, while Blanche abhors roughhousing, violent behavior arouses Stella.

Characters (cont)

She says she found it thrilling when Stanley smashed the light bulbs on their wedding night. After their fight in Scene Three, Stella returns to Stanley's arms in response to his screaming her name "with heaven-splitting violence." ^. ^Throughout the play, Stella is placed between Blanche and Stanley. Blanche, with whom she shares a background and upbringing, represents her past; Stanley, with whom she is deeply in love/lust, represents her present and her future, as the play's ending indicates. By having Blanche committed to a mental institution, thus choosing Stanley, Stella seems to be displaying her practical side, which prompted her to escape the bankrupt Belle Reve life years ago and reminds her she now has a dependent child to support. However, Stella's exchange with Eunice about the rape is oddly ambiguous: "I couldn't believe it and go on living with Stanley," she says, to which Eunice responds, "Don't you ever believe it…you have to go on." If Stella does have doubts about Stanley's innocence, her disregard of Blanche's accusation suggests that she, like Blanche, is capable of denying the truth when it suits her. To paraphrase her sister, Stella doesn't want realism, she wants magic.^. **Stanley Kowalski**

The husband of Stella. Stanley is the epitome of vital force. He is loyal to his friends, passionate to his wife, and heartlessly cruel to Blanche. With his Polish ancestry, he represents the new, heterogeneous America. He sees himself as a social leveler, and wishes to destroy Blanche's social pretensions.

Characters (cont)

Around thirty years of age, Stanley, who fought in World War II, now works as an auto-parts salesman. Practicality is his forte, and he has no patience for Blanche's distortions of the truth. He lacks ideals and imagination. By the play's end, he is a disturbing degenerate: he beats his wife and rapes his sister-in-law. Horrifyingly, he shows no remorse. Yet, Blanche is an outcast from society, while Stanley is the proud family man.. *A list of interesting quotes*

"It looks to me like you have been swindled, baby, and when you're swindled under the Napoleonic code I'm swindled too. And I don't like to be swindled."

Stanley talks to Stella about the family property that Blanche has lost. He has just complained to Stella that Blanche doesn't seem to have any documents that show a sale or transfer of the property. He is accusing Blanche of cheating them out of money that should rightfully be shared by the three of them. This belief is the seed of Stanley's resentment of Blanche—that she is dishonest and has spent their money on clothes and jewellery for herself.

Blanche: "You're simple, straightforward, and honest, a little on the primitive side I should think. To interest you a woman would have to—[She pauses with an indefinite gesture.]" Stanley: "[slowly] Lay . . . her cards on the table."

This exchange between Blanche and Stanley reveals they are opposites, as indicated by the list of qualities noted by Blanche. There is also a dangerous miscommunication occurring. While Blanche believes she is flirting the way she does with most men, Stanley's words reveal he has something more than flirting in mind.

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Characters (cont)

"Stell-lahhhh! . . . I want my baby down here. Stella, Stella!"

After Stella leaves Stanley and goes to Eunice's, Stanley stumbles onto the sidewalk, drunk, soaking wet, and half dressed, and screams this line, perhaps the most famous line of the play, toward Eunice's apartment window. His emotional outburst epitomizes the psychological hold he has on Stella. Stanley realizes that he has temporarily lost Stella, but he knows that if he begs, she will return to him. Stella can't help herself, and Stanley knows it.

"Don't ever talk that way to me! "Pig—Polak—disgusting—vulgar—greasy!"—them kind of words have been on your tongue and your sister's too much around here. What do you two think you are? A pair of queens? Remember what Huey Long said—"Every man is a King!" And I am the king around here, so don't forget it!"

Blanche's birthday party has been ruined by Mitch not showing up and Stanley is strutting his ego around at the evening's end, hurling plates onto the floor as he yells at Stella and Blanche. He accuses them of disrespecting him because of his heritage and manners. He wants to ensure they understand that he is the master of his house. Stanley is right, they do not respect him, and the eruption of raw emotions creates fear in the sisters and suspense for the audience.

"Ha-ha! Rain from heaven! [He extends the bottle toward her] Shall we bury the hatchet and make it a loving-cup? Huh?"

Characters (cont)

Stanley and Blanche are alone in Scene Ten because Stella is in the hospital. He has just opened a bottle of beer and a "geyser of foam" shoots up, a sexual image foreshadowing the action to follow. Stanley has just become a father, so he wants to celebrate. Stanley's invitation is loaded with double entendre, a verbal jousting that he and Blanche have demonstrated throughout the play.

"I've been on to you from the start! Not once did you pull any wool over this boy's eyes. You come in here and sprinkle the place with powder and spray perfume and cover the light-bulb with a paper lantern, and lo and behold the place has turned into Egypt and you and the Queen of the Nile!"

Fueled by alcohol, the excitement of the new baby, and finally being alone with Blanche, Stanley is beginning to let Blanche hear what he truly thinks of her. Immediately after these lines, Stanley laughs cruelly at Blanche. The stage directions indicate that the shadows are "of a grotesque and menacing form." Stanley's laughter is the beginning of the rape.

Further analysis

^Audience members may well see Stanley as an egalitarian hero at the play's start. He is loyal to his friends and passionate to his wife. Stanley possesses an animalistic physical vigor that is evident in his love of work, of fighting, and of sex. His family is from Poland, and several times he expresses his outrage at being called "Polack" and other derogatory names.

Characters (cont)

When Blanche calls him a "Polack," he makes her look old-fashioned and ignorant by asserting that he was born in America, is an American, and can only be called "Polish." Stanley represents the new, heterogeneous America to which Blanche doesn't belong, because she is a relic from a defunct social hierarchy. He sees himself as a social leveler, as he tells Stella in Scene Eight.^. Stanley's intense hatred of Blanche is motivated in part by the aristocratic past Blanche represents. He also (rightly) sees her as untrustworthy and does not appreciate the way she attempts to fool him and his friends into thinking she is better than they are. Stanley's animosity toward Blanche manifests itself in all of his actions toward her—his investigations of her past, his birthday gift to her, his sabotage of her relationship with Mitch.

^In the end, Stanley's down-to-earth character proves harmfully crude and brutish. His chief amusements are gambling, bowling, sex, and drinking, and he lacks ideals and imagination. His disturbing, degenerate nature, first hinted at when he beats his wife, is fully evident after he rapes his sister-in-law. Stanley shows no remorse for his brutal actions. The play ends with an image of Stanley as the ideal family man, comforting his wife as she holds their newborn child. The wrongfulness of this representation, given what we have learned about him in the play, ironically calls into question society's decision to ostracize Blanche.^. **Harold "Mitch" Mitchell**
Stanley's army friend, coworker, and poker buddy, who courts Blanche until he finds out that she lied to him about her sordid past.

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Characters (cont)

Mitch, like Stanley, is around thirty years of age. Though he is clumsy, sweaty, and has unrefined interests like muscle building, Mitch is more sensitive and more gentlemanly than Stanley and his other friends, perhaps because he lives with his mother, who is slowly dying. Blanche and Mitch are an unlikely match: Mitch doesn't fit the bill of the chivalric hero, the man Blanche dreams will come to rescue her. Nevertheless, they bond over their lost loves, and when the doctor takes Blanche away against her will, Mitch is the only person present besides Stella who despairs over the tragedy.. *A list of interesting quotes:*

"She knew she was dying when she give me this. A very strange girl, very sweet—-very."

Mitch is having his first conversation with Blanche, who has just admired his silver cigarette case. The case is inscribed with a quotation from Elizabeth Barrett Browning: "And if God choose, I shall but love thee better—after—death." The lines reveal Mitch's softer side and his vulnerability, having lost someone he loved. The intimate moment between him and Blanche prompts her to say, "Sorry makes for sincerity, I think."

"I like you to be exactly the way that you are, because in all my—experience—I have never known anyone like you."

Mitch reveals his feelings about Blanche to her during their evening date. Back at the flat, they have a candid conversation about affection and emotions and intentions. During this conversation, Mitch exposes his honest feelings, to himself, to Blanche, and to the audience. Sadly for him, Blanche's reaction is an outburst of laughter. His honesty and vulnerability are too much to bear for Blanche, a woman who runs from reality.

Characters (cont)

"I weigh two hundred and seven pounds and I'm six feet one and one half inches tall in my bare feet—without shoes on. And that is what I weigh stripped."

^Mitch's description of his physical form reveals he is getting comfortable talking to Blanche. He admits that he is self-conscious of perspiring, which is why he doesn't want to take off his coat and that he has been working out at the New Orleans Athletic Club. Blanche's reply is, "Oh my goodness, me! It's awe-inspiring." It is an intimate moment between them. They are both conscious of their appearances, a fact Blanche could use to develop a real connection with Mitch. Instead, she tries to put him at ease and pave the way for a physical relationship.^. "You need somebody. And I need somebody, too. Could it be—you and me, Blanche?"

At the end on Scene Six, Mitch asks Blanche if she thinks they could be a couple. As if in response, they embrace and kiss. His words are at most a proposal of marriage, at least an admission that they are two lost souls who might have found mates. The scene has been a volatile one where Mitch has listened to Blanche's confession about her first marriage and its tragic end. At this point in the play, it almost seems that Blanche and Mitch have found love, or at least, peace.

"My youth was suddenly gone up the water spout, and—I met you. You said you needed somebody. Well, I needed somebody, too. I thanked God for you, because you seemed to be gentle—a cleft in the rock of the world that I could hide in!"

Characters (cont)

When Mitch shows up after Blanche's birthday party, she confronts him with many truths, and this admission of her willingness to be with him is among them. Mitch accuses her of lying to him, but she disagrees and states she "didn't lie in my heart," a statement that reveals Blanche's more vulnerable side.

Further analysis

Perhaps because he lives with his dying mother, Mitch is noticeably more sensitive than Stanley's other poker friends. The other men pick on him for being a mama's boy. Even in his first, brief line in Scene One, Mitch's gentlemanly behavior stands out. Mitch appears to be a kind, decent human being who, we learn in Scene Six, hopes to marry so that he will have a woman to bring home to his dying mother. Mitch doesn't fit the bill of the chivalric hero of whom Blanche dreams. He is clumsy, sweaty, and has unrefined interests like muscle building. Though sensitive, he lacks Blanche's romantic perspective and spirituality, as well as her understanding of poetry and literature. She toys with his lack of intelligence—for example, when she teases him in French because she knows he won't understand—duping him into playing along with her self-flattering charades.

^Though they come from completely different worlds, Mitch and Blanche are drawn together by their mutual need of companionship and support, and they therefore believe themselves right for one another. They also discover that they have both experienced the death of a loved one. The snare in their relationship is sexual.

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Characters (cont)

As part of her prim-and-proper act, Blanche repeatedly rejects Mitch's physical affections, refusing to sleep with him. Once he discovers the truth about Blanche's sordid sexual past, Mitch is both angry and embarrassed about the way Blanche has treated him. When he arrives to chastise her, he states that he feels he deserves to have sex with her, even though he no longer respects her enough to think her fit to be his wife.^. ^The difference in Stanley's and Mitch's treatment of Blanche at the play's end underscores Mitch's fundamental gentlemanliness. Though he desires and makes clear that he wants to sleep with Blanche, Mitch does not rape her and leaves when she cries out. Also, the tears Mitch sheds after Blanche struggles to escape the fate Stanley has arranged for her show that he genuinely cares for her. In fact, Mitch is the only person other than Stella who seems to understand the tragedy of Blanche's madness.^. **Eunice**

Stella's friend, upstairs neighbor, and landlady. Eunice and her husband, Steve, represent the low-class, carnal life that Stella has chosen for herself. Like Stella, Eunice accepts her husband's affections despite his physical abuse of her. At the end of the play, when Stella hesitates to stay with Stanley at Blanche's expense, Eunice forbids Stella to question her decision and tells her she has no choice but to disbelieve Blanche.

A list of interesting quotes

Characters (cont)

"You can't beat on a woman an' then call 'er back! She won't come! And her goin' t' have a baby! . . . You stinker! You whelp of a Polak, you! I hope they do haul you in and turn the fire hose on you, same as the last time."

^Eunice confronts Stanley who is calling for Stella from the sidewalk. Stella, accompanied by Blanche, had escaped to Eunice's upstairs apartment after Stanley hit her on the night of the poker game. However adamant Eunice is about what should happen next, she is mistaken. Stella does return to Stanley that same night. She forgives him. Eunice is one of the few who stand up to Stanley and tells him the truth about himself. Her words also suggest that Stanley has been violent toward Stella before.^. "I always did say that men are callous things with no feelings, but this does beat anything. Making pigs of yourselves."

Eunice's lines, spoken in the final moments of the play, serve as a reminder that this drama is focused on the complex relationships between men and women. The men—Stanley, Steve, Mitch, and Pablo—are playing poker and Eunice walks through on her way to see Stella and Blanche. Eunice's passing comment serves as a closing statement of sorts.

"Don't ever believe it. Life has got to go on. No matter what happens, you've got to keep on going."

^At the end of the play, Eunice explains to Stella her philosophy of life. Blanche, unable to live in reality, is about to be taken away to a mental institution.

Characters (cont)

Stella is unable to accept that Stanley raped Blanche, a stance Eunice supports with the words, "Don't ever believe it." Stella cannot reconcile Stanley, a rapist, with Stanley, her husband and the father of her newborn child. In a way, Stella, like Blanche, struggles with her own integrity, and chooses to sacrifice Blanche to keep her family intact.^. "You done the right thing, the only thing you could do. She couldn't stay here; there wasn't no other place for her to go."

As she is throughout the play, Eunice is the voice of reason as the drama concludes, comforting Stella as she allows Blanche to be taken to a mental institution. By the play's tragic end, all of the characters, with the exception of Eunice, have lost track of what is right, what is true. It would seem Eunice's role is to remind the other characters that they must each do what they had to do to survive and get through life.

Further analysis

^Compared to Blanche and Stella, Eunice appears worldly and competent. She and Steve are established enough to own the building they live in. Stella and especially Blanche are keen to brush over or hide the uglier sides of their lives, but Eunice approaches her struggles head-on and deals with them efficiently and practically. Eunice understands how their community functions and she acts as a mediator between Stella, Blanche, and Stanley. When the men's poker night gets out of control, Eunice is the one to take in Blanche and Stella without question while Stanley cools off.^. ^Like Stella and Stanley, Eunice and Steve have a teasing, overtly physical, occasionally violent relationship.

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Characters (cont)

Eunice angrily confronts her husband about his affair and threatens to go to the police when he hits her. Later, however, they make up quickly and passionately, similar to the way Stella and Stanley immediately reconcile. Although she yells and makes threats, Eunice seems to have no intention or desire to actually leave Steve. She is settled in her home and routine, and as is revealed later, Eunice believes male companionship is a woman's anchor in society.^. ^At the end of the play, as Blanche is escorted to an asylum, Eunice is compassionate but firm, able to keep her composure when Stella is overwhelmed. However, by assuring Stella that she doesn't have to believe Stanley raped Blanche, Eunice in effect enables Stanley's inexcusable act and argues that marriage is a woman's means of survival. Given what the audience sees Eunice suffer at the hands of her husband, it is unlikely that she believes nothing of Blanche's story. However, acknowledging its truth would require her to acknowledge her own husband's abuse, and it would interfere with her own survival.^. **Allan Grey**

The young man with poetic aspirations whom Blanche fell in love with and married as a teenager. One afternoon, she discovered Allan in bed with an older male friend. That evening at a ball, after she announced her disgust at his homosexuality, he ran outside and shot himself in the head. Allan's death, which marked the end of Blanche's sexual innocence, has haunted her ever since. Long dead by the time of the play's action, Allan never appears onstage.

A young collector

A teenager who comes to the Kowalskis' door to collect for the newspaper when Blanche is home alone.

Characters (cont)

The boy leaves bewildered after Blanche hits on him and gives him a passionate farewell kiss. He embodies Blanche's obsession with youth and presumably reminds her of her teenage love, the young poet Allan Grey, whom she married and lost to suicide. Blanche's flirtation with the newspaper collector also displays her unhealthy sexual preoccupation with teenage boys, which we learn of later in the play.. **Shep Huntleigh**

A former suitor of Blanche's whom she met again a year before her arrival in New Orleans while vacationing in Miami. Despite the fact that Shep is married, Blanche hopes he will provide the financial support for her and Stella to escape from Stanley. As Blanche's mental stability deteriorates, her fantasy that Shep is coming to sweep her away becomes more and more real to her. Shep never appears onstage, and it's theorised that he never existed.

Steve

Stanley's poker buddy who lives upstairs with his wife, Eunice. Like Stanley, Steve is a brutish, hot-blooded, physically fit male and an abusive husband.

Pablo

Stanley's poker buddy. Like Stanley and Steve, Steve is physically fit and brutish. Pablo is Hispanic, and his friendship with Steve, Stanley, and Mitch emphasizes the culturally diverse nature of their neighborhood.

An unnamed black woman

Characters (cont)

In Scene One, the unnamed Black woman is sitting on the steps talking to Eunice when Blanche arrives, and she finds Stanley's openly sexual gestures toward Stella hilarious. Later, in Scene Ten, we see her scurrying across the stage in the night as she rifles through a prostitute's lost handbag.

A doctor

At the play's finale, the doctor arrives to whisk Blanche off to an asylum. He and the nurse initially seem to be heartless institutional caretakers, but, in the end, the doctor appears more kindly as he takes off his jacket and leads Blanche away. This image of the doctor ironically conforms to Blanche's notions of the chivalric Southern gentleman who will offer her salvation.

A Mexican woman

A vendor of Mexican funeral decorations who frightens Blanche by issuing the plaintive call "Flores para los muertos," which means "Flowers for the dead."

A Nurse

Also called the "Matron," she accompanies the doctor to collect Blanche and bring her to an institution. She possesses a severe, unfeminine manner and has a talent for subduing hysterical patients.

Shaw

A supply man who is Stanley's coworker and his source for stories of Blanche's disreputable past in Laurel, Mississippi. Shaw travels regularly through Laurel.

Prostitute

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Characters (cont)

Moments before Stanley rapes Blanche, the back wall of the Kowalskis' apartment becomes transparent, and Blanche sees a prostitute in the street being pursued by a male drunkard. The prostitute's situation evokes Blanche's own predicament. After the prostitute and the drunkard pass, the Black woman scurries by with the prostitute's lost handbag in hand.

Setting

The context of place

For writers like TW, place is at least as much a part of feeling and atmosphere as is time. Williams went to live in the city of New Orleans in 1938, drawn by its liberal, sexuality-tolerant ethos. (To be gay in much of America at this time was not easy.) His Streetcar stage directions, typically for him, are richly detailed and fluidly readable. We are in no doubt of where we are, and what we are looking at.

"The exterior of a two-storey corner building on a street in New Orleans which is named Elysian Fields and runs between the L & N tracks and the [Mississippi] river."

This is how the playscript starts and you'd be daft to relocate the play to New York, New Zealand or Newham. It's as if New Orleans is a character in this play, one that holds the anxieties, passions and historical past in the fabric of its streets, levees, and riverbanks. Its "raffish charm" and "atmosphere of decay" (Williams' phrases) create an atmosphere and a sensual grounding for the complex interactions between Stanley, his wife Stella and her sister Blanche. There is a sensuous particularity about the space Williams wants the actors and designer to create:.

Setting (cont)

"You can almost feel the warm breath of the brown river beyond the river warehouse with the faint redolence's of bananas and coffee"

So what makes New Orleans so powerful and appropriate a setting? There's a rather arcane (some would say pseudo) science, called psychogeography. It's a handy concept for thinking about the very active role that the city plays in Streetcar. The very title gives a clue -- out-of-towner Blanche arrives in the city and follows advise to catch the streetcar whose terminus is Desire Street. It's the one with "-Desire" on the front. She has to change to the Cemeteries Line. So that's Sex and Death, major themes pulsing through the play, marked out in terms of mass transit.. She has to get off at Elysian Fields, a street in the easy of the city, and the resting place, in Greek mythology, of the souls of heroes who have died. Blanche DuBois, already damaged emotionally, and economically vulnerable, has come in search of a hero who can rescue and protect her, only to suffer full-blown mental breakdown at the hands of Stanley Kowalski, one of the great anti-heroes of Western literature.

New Orleans is a port city, historically a source of vitality, fertility and variety. In the group of men playing cards are a man with Polish roots (Stanley), Latin-American origins (Pablo), the streets have a black woman (unfortunately nameless), and a Mexican flower-seller. Even Blanche and Stella's surname reminds us that this part of the Deep South is stepped in French culture, as is the port's name.

Setting (cont)

There's an openness, a fertility about the idea of ports, that perhaps appealed to the gay sensibility of Williams, and he certainly found it an island of anti-Puritan bohemianism in the heart of Puritan culture when he set up home there in 1938.. The setting of a Streetcar isn't just incidental. It's right at the heart of what Williams is most interested in.

Further reading (LitCharts)

A Streetcar Named Desire is set in the late 1940s, post-World War II, which is also the time period in which the play was written. Williams is highly detailed in identifying his setting—not just New Orleans but a specific address in that city: 632 Elysian Fields Avenue, "running between the L & N [railroad] tracks and the [Mississippi] River," adjacent to the French Quarter. An actual street in New Orleans, Elysian Fields was named after the Avenue des Champs-Élysées in Paris, but unlike that elegant French boulevard of shops and restaurants, it was always a mixed commercial and residential area for the working classes. Developed in the second half of the 19th century, this section of Elysian Fields had become a particularly low-rent neighborhood by the time of the play. So, the street where Stella lives, like Stella herself, possesses a grander, old-world heritage that has fallen in status.. The stage directions situate the Kowalskis' building carefully, noting the presence of a bowling alley and a bar around the corner—the latter close enough to hear its music, "a blue piano that expresses the spirit of the life which goes on here." In this way, the stage directions referring to the setting express and punctuate the events of the play, as if to comment on the action.

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Setting (cont)

That action takes place primarily inside and in front of the Kowalskis' two-room apartment, though the street itself is also visible.. In almost every way, Elysian Fields represents the opposite of where Blanche comes from and what she is used to. It is noisy, filled with the sounds of howling cats, rattling trains, and street vendors' cries, and it is crowded, with people living atop one another. Neighbors are able to easily hear each other and often conduct their personal lives—gossiping, kissing, fighting, and reconciling—in public, on the porches and sidewalks. In contrast, Blanche is accustomed to the quiet of the country and plenty of space and privacy. Elysian Fields is poor, industrial, and, if not highly dangerous, at least home to shady activities, like those of the prostitutes who rob drunks on the sidewalk after dark. Blanche, however, is used to surroundings of respectability and gentility, places built by beauty-loving aristocrats living lives of leisure. Most of all, Elysian Fields is cosmopolitan, a place "where there is a relatively warm and easy intermingling of races" and nationalities. Blanche grew up in a comparatively homogenous environment, the bucolic but carefully stratified society of a country town.. From the start, Blanche appears incongruous to Elysian Fields. This incongruity emphasizes the themes of Streetcar: the clash of the rural Old South with the industrial New South; the past's inexorable yielding to the present; the decline of illusion and magic in the face of reality.

Setting (cont)

It also telegraphs the main arc of the play: the inability of the weak and well-bred to survive in the rough, modern world of vulgar but vital commoners. Elysian Fields is not necessarily a bad place; it even has "a raffish charm." But ultimately, this setting proves malevolent to Blanche and is instrumental in her downfall..

Techniques and approaches typical of TW to use

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