

# Candidate 5

QUESTION	
	A literary study of W.H. Auden's use of landscape
	in order to explore the human condition.
	- Macau
	- Dover, 1937
	- Spain, 1936
	- September 1 <sup>st</sup> , 1939.

QUESTION	
27	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Plan</u></p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Intro - Blanche lives in world of illusions, <sup>+Tom</sup> Amanda in past + love in <i>G. Menagerie</i>.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Plastic theatre = stagecraft (sound, costume, settings)</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Alienated from reality. memory plays</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Theme - inescapable reality + past.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• One setting - separate from outside world, blue piano, fire escape - memory!</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clothing - Amanda is the past, Blanche 'incognito'</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Symbolism - Menagerie - larvae of people + isolated, Maurice/Tom separated from reality, paper lantern "magic"</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How this destroys them in the end. Unicorn is shattered, Tom a quiet hidden wanderer, Blanche raped + mentally disintegrated.</li> </ul>

In Tennessee Williams' 'A Streetcar Named Desire' and 'The Glass Menagerie', the main characters are alienated from reality and the world surrounding them. In each play, the characters are obsessed with the past which they idealise and try to recreate in order to escape the bulk of their situations. Williams uses stagecraft expertly in order to convey this separation from reality. through this use of plastic theatre allows symbolic meaning to be attached to props, lighting

and sound in order to convey his themes of the inescapable past and isolation. In 'Streetcar', the character of Blanche manufactures a world of illusions in order to escape reality, and in 'Menagerie' Amanda and Tom are both stuck in the past, with Laura being too fragile and vulnerable to fit in with society. Eventually, however, each character is forced to face reality, and Williams uses the same pattern of romantic aspiration, momentary fulfilment and ultimate loss in each play to portray his main ideas.

Williams takes advantage of his plays being memories by using stagecraft in an unrealistic way in order to exaggerate aspects of the characters and the stories and attach significance for the audience. In 'Menagerie' Tom's first monologue is used to explain this:

"The play is memory. Being a memory play, it is dimly lighted, it is sentimental, it is not realistic."

In this opening, Williams informs the audience that his narrators are unreliable and that the things that go on in the play

are not realistic, in fact they are tools he uses in order to convey his ideas. The first way in which he does this is by using only one setting in each play. In 'Menagerie' the Wingfield's apartment and in 'Streetcar' the home of Stella + Stanley Kowalski. By using only one setting, the characters are not only claustrophobic, thus heightening the emotions forcing their dreams to be confronted and destroyed; but <sup>the audience</sup> they are is also given the impression that they are removed from the outside society. <sup>Throughout</sup> 'Streetcar', the 'blue piano' can be heard from outside the apartment to represent the world Blanche is isolated from. And in 'Menagerie' Williams uses the fire escape symbolically as a way to separate the family from the outside world. Thus Tom's tendency to smoke out on the fire escape becomes symbolic of his hope to escape into the real world; which we later see to be impossible. Tom also addresses their alienation from the world around them in his opening lines:

"he is the only realistic character in the play, being an emissary from a world of reality we were somehow set apart from."

Dialogue is used here to highlight to the audience that the Wingfields

are removed from reality. This extract also introduces the character of Tim, who represents Amanda and Laura's dreams. He is described as "that long-delayed but always expected something." and thus is symbolic of Laura's illusions that of no longer being different and out of place in society. Tim also symbolises Amanda's momentary fulfilment as she desperately attempts to recreate her past through Laura. It can thus be seen that these characters are completely alienated from reality as they wait for a "something" that can never come.

Similarly, in 'Menagerie' the character of Hercules 'Mitch' is used to show Blanche's separation from reality. She uses him in order to try and recreate her young husband, Alan Grey, who killed himself after she found ~~himself~~ out that he ~~was~~ was gay. Throughout the play it is revealed that she carries around the guilt from his death and attempts to create an alternate version of the past in order to replace this demonic memory that haunts her. As a result, Mitch is used by Williams in the same way as Tim, to

symbolise the momentary fulfillment of romantic ideals before the ultimate loss, a main theme in both plays. Blanche however lies in order to make manipulate Mitch, ~~and~~ into believing her facade as an innocent Southern Belle:

"I guess it's just that I have old fashioned ideals!"  
 [She rolls her eyes knowing he cannot see her face.]"

Here it is clear that Blanche is ~~creating~~ attempting to create an illusion so that she can marry Mitch and escape the horrors of her past. She calls him a "cleft in the rock of the world that [she] could hide in", meaning that she wants to use him to escape rather than face reality. Similarly, Amanda denies the reality of Laura's limp because that would mean accepting the fact that the past cannot be recreated. In both cases, the characters alienate themselves from a reality that is too difficult to face. However, in the end, both of their illusions are shattered, causing Blanche to descend into madness and Amanda to admit to having a daughter that is "unmarried,

crippled and has no job." It is highlighted in these moments how far removed these characters are from reality as they struggle to deal with the truth of their situation.

~~William's~~ As well as setting and characterisation, William's uses plastic theatre in order to separate his characters from the world around them. Through highly detailed stage directions, he has created texts that go well beyond dialogue and plot. When Blanche is first introduced ~~she is~~ her appearance is described as being "incongruous to the setting" because she is dressed all in white. ~~and~~ This represents her fragility and also the contrast between her and the surrounding world. ~~Thus~~ Her clothing foreshadows her eventual mental death as it conveys how delicate ~~she~~ her mental state is. In 'Meropis' Amanda's clothing is used as a way to convey that she is living in the past instead of the reality of their day.

[She wears a girlish frock of yellow voile and a blue silk sash. She carries a bunch of jonquils. The legend of her youth is newly revived.]

The use of the word 'nearly' here foreshadows the ultimate destruction of her dream; but at this point she is temporarily living in the past. The props here ('jungle' items) are symbolic of the time she idealises, before she had her final gentleman caller, her husband, who abandoned her. Williams also changes Amanda's dialogue to a southern dialect, demonstrating her alienation from the present. He is able to portray his themes here of a past that is idealised and thus cannot be recreated.

Finally, the characters' separation from reality is represented effectively in the symbols utilised by Williams. In 'Menagerie', Laura's ~~innocent~~ <sup>+ innocence</sup> virginal nature is represented by her collection of glass figures. Just as glass is easily shattered, Laura is delicate. Thus in the climactic scene of the play, Jim accidentally breaks the horn of her glass unicorn, and momentarily Laura sees this as "a blessing in disguise" because it represents her finally fitting into <sup>society.</sup> ~~reality~~. However, the audience realises that this dream is only to be

fulfilled temporarily, and when it is found out that Jim is engaged to another girl, Lorraine is left like the unicorn, broken and still a social outcast. Amanda's illusions are also shattered at this point:

"Betty? Betty? What's Betty? [There is an ominous crashing sound in the sky.]"

The stage directions here are an example of Williams using sound to convey the feeling of this moment. It can thus be seen that Amanda was so separated from reality that her world seems to have fallen apart as a result of this revelation.

In 'Streetcar', Blanche's alienation from her reality is represented in the "adorable little coloured paper lantern" she buys to cover the light. Throughout the play, Williams uses the light to represent the truth that Blanche attempts to escape. ~~Best~~ paper is easily. The lantern allows her to create an illusion to hide her promiscuity. Williams explores the theme of death as a result of desire through Blanche's

"intimacies with strangers" that she attempts to hide from everyone around her. Blanche wants to be seen as an innocent Southern Belle so that she can get back to the days before Alan Gray's death; however her desires have meant that she cannot do so. Williams uses sound to show that she is attempting to shut out the reality of her past; but that it follows her everywhere:

[The rapid, feverish polka tune the "Varsouviana" is heard.

The music is in her mind; she is drinking to escape.]

Hope the audience can see that her illusions, the "magic" she tries to create can never fully mask the demons and desires of her past, an integral theme of the plays.

From the beginning this is foretold:-

"The told me to take a streetcar named desire, then  
change to one called cemeteries then ride six blocks  
and get off at - Elysian fields!"

Her journey to New Orleans mirrors the structure of the play, as scene six is the beginning of her illusions beginning to break down. Blanche's alienation from reality is exposed

in scene 9 when Mitch rips the paper lantern off of the lightbulb. ~~As~~ As the lantern symbolises Blanche's removal from reality, this is symbolic of her being forced to face the truth. This is further seen in the next scene where she is raped by Stanley. Stanley shatters any hopes she has of Williams's ~~then~~ ~~uses~~ ~~her~~ finding peace again and exerts his power over her.

Williams is then able to demonstrate Blanche's alienation from reality through her response when forced to face it. The audience can see how far removed she was from the truth because she cannot cope with her situation and instead is forced into madness and eventually mental death. As she is taken away by a doctor, she ~~then~~ says:

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

This echoes the idea of "inimacities with strangers", ultimately being tying her mental death to her desires and promiscuity which ~~then~~ had occupied her life since the

