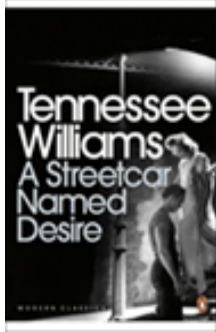




### A Streetcar Named Desire Tennessee Williams (1947)



#### Assessment: Paper 1 Voices in Speech and Writing

Section B Drama Texts  
One extract based essay question (25 marks) 1 hour 15 minutes



#### AOs

- AO1 Apply concepts and methods from integrated linguistic and literary study as appropriate, using associated terminology and coherent written expression
- AO2 Analyse ways in which meanings are shaped in texts
- AO3 Demonstrate understanding of the significance and influence of the contexts in which texts are produced and received

#### Terminology

- coda**  
a conclusion which provides a satisfying ending
- connotations**  
the associations that words have
- denouement**  
the final resolution or clarification of the plot-the events following the climax of the action
- epigraph**  
a short quotation or saying at the beginning of a literary work intended to suggest its theme
- Expressionistic theatre**  
Theatre which expresses the inner world of emotion rather than external objective reality
- foil**  
a character who clearly contrasts with another
- hamartia**  
tragic flaw or error of judgement
- hyperbole**  
exaggeration
- metaphor/simile**  
comparison between two things where one thing is said to be another/ comparison using like or as
- monologue**  
a long speech by one character as part of a conversation
- motif**  
recurring image or idea
- oxymoron**  
a combination of contradictory or incongruous words
- pathos**  
a deep feeling of sympathy or pity for a character
- peripeteia**  
a character's tragic reversal of fortune
- Plastic theatre**  
Williams' term for his style- mix of naturalism and expressionistic theatre
- protagonist/antagonist**  
main character/character who is in opposition to the main character
- tableau**

#### Characters (vocabulary)

Blanche	Stella	Stanley	Mitch
vulnerable	dependent	masculine	gentle
delicate	devoted	sexual magnetism	sensitive
dismissive	loyal	(n)	awkward
superior	pliant	confident	inexperienced
self-absorbed	amenable	contemptuous	naïve
vain	dutiful	hostile	gauche
refined	placid	bravado (n)	
fanciful	obliging	coarse	
deluded	forgiving	shrewd	
volatile		domineering	
impassioned		callous	
fantasist (n)		primitive	
histrionic		vengeful	
distraught			



#### Wider Reading/Further Study

- Tennessee Williams:
  - Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*;
  - The Glass Menagerie*
- Chekhov, *The Cherry Orchard*
- Margaret Mitchell, *Gone With the Wind* or 1939 film version starring Vivien Leigh
- Tennessee Williams, *Memoirs* (1976)
- S.McEvoy, *Tragedy: A Student Handbook* (2009)



#### Past Paper Questions

##### SAMS

**Extract:** Blanche: May I — speak — plainly? to As the lights fade away, with a lingering brightness on their embrace, the music of the 'blue piano' and trumpet and drums is heard.) [From Scene 4 pp. 46–48]

Using this extract as a starting point, and with reference to other parts of the play, discuss how Williams develops the conflict between the values of the old and new South. In your answer, you must consider Williams' use of linguistic and literary features and relevant contextual factors.

##### 2017

**Extract:** Blanche: How about taking a swim, a moonlight swim at the old rock-quarry? to Stanley: Well, just so he's from somewhere! [From Scene Ten, pp. 90–92]

Using this extract as a starting point, and with reference to other parts of the play, discuss how Blanche's construction of a fantasy escape with Shep reflects the dependency of the female characters on men. In your answer, you must consider Williams' use of linguistic and literary features and relevant contextual factors.

##### 2018

**Extract:** Stella: And admire her dress and tell her she's looking wonderful to Stella: Hush! [From Scene Two pp.17-18]

Using this extract as a starting point, and with reference to other parts of the play, discuss how Williams uses the loss of Belle Reve to present Stanley's attitudes towards property. In your answer, you must consider Williams' use of linguistic and literary features and relevant contextual factors

##### 2019

**Extract:** Blanche: He's left? to Stella: I said I am not in anything that I have a desire to get out of. [From Scene Four, pp 41–42]

Using this extract as a starting point, and with reference to other parts of the play, discuss how Williams uses contrasting attitudes to Stanley's violence to explore the cultural differences between Stella and Blanche.

### **\*2020 (Autumn)**

**Extract:** Blanche We are French by extraction. Our first American ancestors were French Huguenots to in awkward imitation like a dancing bear.) [From Scene III pp. 34–35]

Using this extract as a starting point, and with reference to other parts of the play, discuss Williams' use of the relationship between Blanche and Mitch to explore how Blanche responds to her changed circumstances.

### **\*2021 (Autumn)**

**Extract:** Stanley Lie Number One: to was one of the places called 'Out-of-Bounds'? [From Scene Seven, pp 70–71]

Using this extract as a starting point, and with reference to other parts of the play, discuss how Williams uses Stanley's revelations to prepare for his final confrontation with Blanche in Scene Ten.

### **2022**

**Extract:** Blanche I think you have a great capacity for devotion to Could it be — you and me, Blanche? [From Scene Six, pp 66–67]

Using this extract as a starting point, and with reference to other parts of the play, discuss how Williams presents the influence of Allan Grey on Blanche.

### **2023**

**Extract:** Stella I don't know if I did the right thing. to Blanche Are these grapes washed? [From Scene Eleven, pp 99-101]

Using this extract as a starting point, and with reference to other parts of the play, discuss how Williams uses Stella's refusal to accept that Stanley has raped her sister to comment on women's dependence on men in 1940s USA.

### **2024**

**Extract:** Stella No. Stanley's the only one of his crowd that's likely to get anywhere. to Stanley This game is Spit in the Ocean. [From Scene Three, pp 30–32]

Using this extract as a starting point, and with reference to other parts of the play, discuss how Williams presents differing aspects of masculinity.

### **2025**

**Extract:** *Blanche comes around the corner...* to Eunice: A great big place with white columns [From Scene One, pp 3-5]

Using this extract as a starting point, and with reference to other parts of the play, discuss how Williams develops the dramatic significance of the Kowalski apartment in Elysian Fields.

## **Context**

### **Playwright**

- In 1931 Williams had a nervous breakdown, and in 1937 his sister Rose was sent to a mental institution – like Blanche – and was lobotomised.
- Like Blanche's husband Allan (called 'a degenerate'), Williams was a practising homosexual at a time when it was still illegal.
- Suffering from depression, he resorted to heavy drinking (like Blanche) and drugs.
- He had a lifelong fear of death, especially death from cancer – hinted at in the death of Margaret, one of the many at Belle Reve.

### **Geographical (New Orleans)**

- A city in Louisiana, a southern state in the USA, whose legal system was influenced by the Napoleonic code, cited by Stanley.
- Known as something of a cultural melting pot, where in some parts, including the French Quarter (district), black and white lived alongside each other.
- A 'streetcar' (tram) went to an area called Desire, another to Cemeteries; there is also an avenue called Elysian Fields, referring to where the souls of heroes and the virtuous went in Greek mythology.
- Known as a free-and-easy sort of place, with a lot of music (as in this play), especially jazz, bars and gambling – including poker.

### **The South**

- The DuBois family's wealth would probably have been built on slavery, abolished in the South in 1865.
- After the Southern Confederate states lost the Civil War (1861–5), the South became poor and families like the DuBois declined.
- The decline of wealthy (but slave-owning) Southern families was romanticised in literature and the cinema, for example in *Gone with the Wind*.
- Blanche's refined tastes, including her dislike of vulgarity, reflect the values of the old South

### **Literary and Theatrical**

- Williams can be seen as part of the 'Southern Gothic' movement, characterised by a rich, even grotesque, imagination, and an awareness of being part of a decaying culture.
- Chekhov's play *The Cherry Orchard* is based on a declining family, like the DuBois family, who have to sell their property.
- Strindberg's *Miss Julie* may have influenced Williams's pairing of class conflict and sexual tension in Stanley and Blanche.

### **American Values**

- The USA prided itself on opening its arms to immigrants from all over the world, including Poland, but Blanche still calls Stanley a 'Polack'.
- Stanley feels he is all-American, and that America is 'the greatest country on earth'.
- Stanley has a positive attitude towards conflict and fate, as shown by his belief that, despite poor odds, he would survive the war.
- Stanley is an example of a go-getting, thrusting, competitive working-class man, prepared to crush others (like Blanche) to get what he wants.