

A Streetcar Named Desire Book Notes

A Streetcar Named Desire by Tennessee Williams

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Author/Context

Born in 1911 as Thomas Lanier Williams, Tennessee Williams was the son of a shoe salesman; his mother was the daughter of a minister. He was the middle child of a very violent and confrontational family in Mississippi. His parents were constantly fighting and this background provided the context for most of Williams' plays. It is said that his younger sister, Rose, went insane most likely due to her family upbringing.

Williams discovered his love for writing when he won a national writing award in 1929. He attended the University of Missouri where he studied writing. After seeing a production of Henrik Ibsen's, *Ghosts*, he found his calling. He dropped out of college to help support his father by working in a shoe factory, where he met a man named Stanley Kowalski, after whom he modeled his principal role in *A Streetcar Named Desire*. Finding little good work in Chicago, Williams moved to New Orleans, the setting of most of his plays, and changed his first name to "Tennessee," after the state of his father's birth. Williams fell in love with a man named Frank Merlo after World War II. Merlo's death of lung cancer spurred a deep ten-year depression that is often reflected in his work.

Williams has written twenty-five full length plays, including *The Glass Menagerie*, *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*, *Orpheus Descending*, and *Night of the Iguana*. He is also an accomplished fiction and screenwriter. Most of his plays discuss issues of insanity, depression, abuse, violence, torn families and homophobia. Most take place in the South - namely New Orleans. These issues are all close to Williams' own life, and as his good friend Elia Kazan said, "Everything in his life is in his plays, and everything in his plays is in his life." Common themes throughout Williams' work are the ideas of wanting to escape, running away, and the impossibility of that escape. His work lies in the genre of Realism; a form of playwriting and producing that grew in the mid-twentieth century with playwrights like Arthur Miller and Eugene O'Neill. Williams has won two Pulitzer Prizes and four New York Drama Critics' Circle Awards, among countless others, and is considered one of the foremost American playwrights of our time.

Opening on Broadway in 1947, *A Streetcar Named Desire* was an immediate success, catapulting Williams into mainstream idolatry as an American playwright. Marlon Brando brought the character of Stanley Kowalski to life while Jessica Tandy embodied Blanche Dubois. When the play became a film, the entire original cast returned except for Tandy, who was replaced with *Gone with the Wind*'s Vivien Leigh. The film was just as successful as the play and created a star of Brando. Elia Kazan directed both versions and became a close friend and partner with Williams. Together, they created some of the most memorable American theater in history.

Tennessee Williams died in 1983.



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Plot Summary

Blanche Dubois, a very proper, talkative woman from Mississippi, arrives in New Orleans to stay with her sister, Stella Kowalski. Blanche is overly concerned with her appearance, cleanliness, dress, and upper-class mentality, while Stella has married someone of lower status, Stanley Kowalski. Stanley is from Poland, works in a factory, has little education, but is extremely passionate and handsome. Stella and Stanley have strong chemistry, which fuels their love.

From the beginning of her stay, Blanche and Stanley are at odds; opposing ideals, ways of life, and each other on every minute detail of life. Blanche tells Stella that she has lost Belle Reve, their childhood plantation home. Stanley wants to see the paperwork regarding the property and confronts Blanche about it. During their first conversation/confrontation, they argue and discuss Blanche's past. Stanley tells her that Stella is pregnant.

Stanley has a poker game in his small flat in Elysian Fields inviting three good friends, including Mitch. Mitch spots Blanche at that game and they spark a romance. He has never been married and lives with his sick mother, while Blanche's young husband died tragically many years ago.. While Blanche is flirting with Mitch, she turns on the radio to dance. Stanley erupts, tears it out of the wall, and throws it out the window. Stella is furious and scolds him. He hits her. She runs upstairs away from him to stay with Eunice for the evening, but later comes back to him. They love each other very much despite Stanley's violence.

Mitch and Blanche begin to see each other frequently. Blanche keeps up the facade of virginity, innocence, and properness. She tells him of her young husband's tendency toward homosexuality, her discovery of his secret, and his ultimate suicide. They open up to one another saying how they both need somebody and that they would be good for each other.

Stanley continues to search for evidence on Blanche's blemished past, finding people who knew her in Laurel, the town where she lived and taught English. She lived at a second-rate hotel called the Flamingo, sharing company with many men. She was involved with a seventeen-year-old boy at her school, which is the reason for her sudden departure. She was also evicted from the hotel, because her personal life was too seedy even for them.

Stanley tells Mitch these stories and Mitch stands Blanche up at her birthday dinner. Stanley presents her with the present of a bus ticket out of New Orleans on Tuesday, and erupts at the table, breaking plates and glasses and scaring both Stella and Blanche even more. Mitch arrives later to talk to the drunk Blanche. She attempts to cover up her drunken state and keep him in her life. They fight and he tells her he wants to sleep with her, but she responds that she will only if they were married. He tells her she is not clean enough for him and leaves.



Blanche believes that she is to leave New Orleans to go on a Caribbean cruise with one of her old beaux, Shep Huntleigh. Stanley laughs at her, but tries to make amends because his wife is having a baby. They fight and Blanche tries to stab him with a broken bottle top. She admits to her sketchy past and he shows his bad temper.

Weeks later, Stella has the baby and Stanley hosts another poker game. Blanche believes that she is going on a vacation in the country with Shep. Instead, a doctor and nurse arrive at the door to have her committed. She screams and tries to stay with Stella. After a skirmish, the doctor is kind to her and she begins to trust him. She walks out of the house with him and will go to the institution. Stella cries, wondering if she did the right thing while Stanley hopes that everything will go back to normal now that Blanche has gone.



Major Characters

Blanche Dubois: Blanche Dubois is the older sister of Stella Kowalski who visits them in New Orleans and stays throughout the summer. She was a schoolteacher of English in Mississippi and presents herself as very prim, proper, and prudent. Her name is French and she says, 'It [Dubois] means woods and Blanche means white, so the two together mean white woods. Like an orchard in spring!' (Act III, pg. 177). She was married to a young man named Allan, who committed suicide when she was very young. She drinks and smokes and tells lies. She suffers from continual delusions of hearing polka tunes and gunshots. Stella loves her dearly, but Stanley is in direct opposition to her false appearance and selfish attitude. Blanche cannot be around direct light and is overly concerned with her appearance, accessories, bathing, and age. She has a brief romance with Mitch and is later committed to a mental institution.

Stanley Kowalski: Stanley is Stella's strong and good-looking husband. He works in a factory and has little 'proper' upbringing. Stella loves him dearly, as well, but he has trouble controlling his temper. He is smarter than he appears and is the first person to see through Blanche's facade. He plays poker, bowls, drinks, and is completely in love with Stella. He is often referred to as a Polack and a commoner.

Stella Kowalski: Stella is Blanche's baby sister and young wife of Stanley. She moved to New Orleans from Mississippi when she was young and fell in love with Stanley. She is pregnant during the course of the play and is completely torn between her strong love for her husband and her devoted love to her sister.

Harold Mitchell: Mitch is one of Stanley's friends from the factory as well as one of his poker buddies. He develops a romance with Blanche and believes her to be unique, beautiful, and proper. He dumps her after he discovers her torrid past. He has never been married and lives with his beloved, sick mother. He is described as clumsy, more refined than Stanley is, but still somewhat common.

Minor Characters

Eunice Hubbell: Eunice is the upstairs neighbor in the Elysian Fields house. She constantly fights with her husband, Steve. She helps Stella when she leaves Stanley after the poker night fight and also helps Stella when Blanche is eventually committed.

Steve Hubbell: Steve is Eunice's husband, with whom she is always fighting. He is also one of Stanley's poker buddies who is present during the first big game and the final scene. He seems to be weaker than his wife.

Negro Woman: The Negro woman lives in the same Elysian Fields area as Stanley and Stella do. She meets Blanche in the beginning of the play when she arrives looking for her sister. She represents the racially mixed society of New Orleans in the fifties.



Mexican Woman: The Mexican woman is a flower girl on the streets of New Orleans. She enters the play at specific times, forcing Blanche to remember her dead family.

Young Collector: The young collector for the Evening Star newspaper knocks on the door of the house, looking for money. Blanche sees her young husband in him and seduces him. He represents part of Blanche's tawdry past.

Pablo Gonzales: Pablo is also one of Stanley's poker buddies.

Shep Huntleigh: Shep Huntleigh never appears in the play, but is mentioned by Blanche repeatedly. He is a Texas oil millionaire Blanche used to date in college. Blanche believes that she is to go on a Caribbean cruise with him and that he will save her from the New Orleans trap in which she currently lives.

Nurse/Matron: The Nurse arrives in the last scene to take Blanche away to a mental institution. She is very strict and harsh.

Doctor: The Doctor also arrives in the last scene to take Blanche away to a mental institution. However, he becomes a human being to her when he takes off his hat and offers her his hand to walk away. He represents goodness in the world.

Mitch's Mother: Mitch's mother is also never seen in the play, but is important to Mitch. He has never been married and lives with his mother. She is very ill and this weakness becomes part of Mitch's character.

Blanche's Young Husband: Allan is Blanche's dead husband. He is never seen in the play, either, but affects the rest of her life. He loved her dearly, as did she him, but he made love to a man. Blanche saw him and told him so. In response, he committed suicide.

Shaw: Shaw is a friend of Stanley's who is never seen in the play. He travels through Laurel and knows about Blanche and her reputation. He tells Stanley much of the information on her past that he uses against her.



Objects/Places

Belle Reve: Belle Reve is an old plantation house and the family home where Stella and Blanche grew up. Blanche lost the house because of its high mortgage after Stella left for New Orleans. The loss of Belle Reve is the catalyst for Stanley to suspect Blanche is telling lies.

Elysian Fields Home: Stanley and Stella live in the lower flat of a house located on Elysian Fields in New Orleans. Steve and Eunice live upstairs. This area is of mixed races and is known for being bawdy and colorfully alive.

Flamingo Hotel: The Flamingo Hotel is one of Blanche's homes of the past. It is a second rate hotel in which she lived and practiced prostitution. The hotel eventually threw her out due to her lifestyle.

Laurel: Laurel is a small town in Mississippi where Blanche lived for some time. Stanley has friends who travel through Laurel and find out Blanche's true reputation.

Moon Lake Casino: Blanche and her young husband went to the Moon Lake Casino for a fun evening of drinking. They danced and Blanche told him that she saw him with a man. He shot himself in the mouth on the side road of the Casino.

Polka Tune: The music of polka revisits Blanche's mind often. It reminds her of the evening her husband died and sets her off into another world. The polka sounds are indications of her unstable mentality.

Four Deuces: The Four Deuces is the neighborhood bar that most characters frequent. Steve and Eunice drink there, as do Stanley and Stella. It is a place of safety away from the Elysian Fields home.

Silver Cigarette Case: Mitch carries around a beautiful silver cigarette case engraved with a Browning poem about death. He offers Blanche a cigarette from it when they first meet, spurring their romance.

Chinese Lamp Cover: Blanche purchases a paper lamp cover to mask the light in the room. She cannot be seen in direct light and it makes her uncomfortable and nervous. It is her first change to the home and illustrates her suffocating impact on Stanley and Stella.

Cigarettes: Blanche constantly smokes cigarettes during the play. They seem to be another one of her weaknesses and give her something to hold on to.

Light: Blanche will not be seen in or around direct light. Any form of direct light becomes harmful to her disposition. She constantly covers lamps and only leaves the house in the evenings.



Blanche's Trunk: This trunk contains everything that Blanche owns. It is stuffed with her jewelry, elaborate clothing, mortgage papers, and love letters. It is often ransacked by Stanley and is mobile, representing Blanche's mobile life.

Bathroom: Blanche frequents the bathroom in Stanley and Stella's home. She primps and bathes in it constantly and escapes to it when she needs a place to cry, wash up, or be alone.

New Orleans: New Orleans is the city in which the play takes place. It is a mixture of all races and a loud scene of debauchery. It also is a city of great history in the South. New Orleans has streetcars, which make a lot of noise and disturb Blanche during her stay.

Galatoire's: Galatoire's is a restaurant in the neighborhood that Blanche and Stella eat in at the beginning of the play.

Bus ticket: Stanley presents Blanche with a present for her birthday. It is a one way ticket out of New Orleans.



Quotes

Quote 1: "Stella, oh, Stella, Stella! Stella for Star!" Scene 1, pg. 152

Quote 2: "You haven't given me a chance to, honey!" Scene 1, pg. 153

Quote 3: "I'm afraid you won't think they are lovely....They're a mixed lot...." Scene 1, pg. 155

Quote 4: "I want to be *near* you, got to be *with* somebody, I *can't* be *alone*!" Scene 1, pg. 156

Quote 5: "But you are the one that abandoned Belle Reve, not I! I stayed and fought for it, bled for it, almost died for it!" Scene 1, pg. 157

Quote 6: "In the state of Louisiana we have the Napoleonic code according to which what belongs to the wife belongs to the husband and vice versa." Scene 2, pg. 163

Quote 7: "I know I fib a good deal. After all, a woman's charm is fifty per cent illusion, but when a thing is important I tell the truth, and this is the truth: I haven't cheated my sister or you or anyone else as long as I have lived." Scene 2, pg. 167

Quote 8: "These are love-letters, yellowing with antiquity, all from one boy.....Poems a dead boy wrote. I hurt him the way that you would like to hurt me, but you can't! I'm not young and vulnerable any more. But my young husband was...." Scene 2, pg. 168

Quote 9: "No. Stanley's the only one of his crowd that's likely to get anywhere." Scene 3, pg. 174

Quote 10: "And if God choose, / I shall but love thee better - after - death!" Scene 3, pg. 176

Quote 11: "It's a French name. It means woods and Blanche means white, so the two together mean white woods. Like an orchard in spring!" Scene 3, pg. 176-77

Quote 12: "Poker shouldn't be played in a house with women." Scene 3, pg. 178

Quote 13: "Stella! My baby doll's left me!...I want my baby!...Stella!...Stella!" Scene 3, pg. 179

Quote 14: "Thank you for being so kind! I need kindness now." Scene 3, pg. 181

Quote 15: "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." Scene 4, pg. 183

Quote 16: "You take it for granted that I am in something that I want to get out of." Scene 4, pg. 187



Quote 17: "He acts like an animal, has an animal's habits! Eats like one, moves like one, talks like one! There's something even sub-human-something not quite to the stage of humanity yet! Yes, something - ape-like about him.....Thousands and thousands of years have passed him right by, and there he is - Stanley Kowalksi - survivor of the stone age!...And you - you here - waiting for him! Maybe he'll strike you or maybe grunt and kiss you! That is, if kisses have been discovered yet!" Scene 4, pg. 188

Quote 18: "What I mean is - he thinks I'm sort of - prim and proper, you know! I want to *deceive* him enough to make him - want me..." Scene 5, pg. 194

Quote 19: "Now run along, now, quickly! It would be nice to keep you, but I've got to be good - and keep my hands off children." Scene 5, pg. 196

Quote 20: "You know as well as I do that a single girl, a girl alone in the world, has got to keep a firm hold on her emotions or she'll be lost!" Scene 6, pg. 198

Quote 21: "You're a natural gentleman, one of the very few that are left in the world. I don't want you to think that I am severe and old maid schoolteacherish or anything like that....I guess it's just that I have - old-fashioned ideals!" Scene 6, pg. 201

Quote 22: "You need somebody. And I need somebody, too. Could it be - you and me, Blanche?" Scene 6, pg. 204

Quote 23: "The trouble with Dame Blanche was that she couldn't put on her act any more in Laurel! They got wised up after two or three dates with her and then they quit, and she goes on to another, the same old line, same old act, same old hooey! But the town was too small for this to go on forever! And as time went by she became a town character. Regarded as not just different but downright loco-nuts." Scene 7, pg. 207

Quote 24: "Her future is mapped out for her." Scene 7, pg. 210

Quote 25: "That's how I'll clear the table!" Scene 8, pg. 212

Quote 26: "When we first met, me and you, you thought I was common. How right you was, baby. I was common as dirt. You showed me the snapshot of the place with the columns. I pulled you down off them columns and how you loved it, having them colored lights going! And wasn't we happy together, wasn't it all okay till she showed here?" Scene 8, pg. 215

Quote 27: "It's dark in here....I don't think I ever seen you in the light....What it means is I've never had a real good look at you..." Scene 9, pg. 218

Quote 28: "Yes, I had many intimacies with strangers....So I came here. There was nowhere else I could go. I was played out....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!" Scene 9, pg. 219-220



Quote 29: "I don't think I want to marry you any more....You're not clean enough to bring in the house with my mother." Scene 9, pg. 221

Quote 30: "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 are the Queen of the Nile! Sitting on your throne and swilling down my liquor!" Scene 10, pg. 225-26

Quote 31: "Whoever you are - I have always depended on the kindness of strangers." Scene 11, pg. 235



Topic Tracking: Lies/Honesty

Scenes 2 and 3

Lies/Honesty 1: Stanley tells Stella about the Napoleonic Code. He believes he is swindled if she is swindled. He also believes that Blanche is lying to them both about the loss of Belle Reve. However, he also violates trust and truth by rummaging through Blanche's trunk.

Lies/Honesty 2: Blanche admits that she fibs a lot and believes it to be part of womanhood. However, she adds that when a matter is important she does not lie and would never lie to or swindle her family. She tells the truth about her own lying up-front, acknowledging her small faults.

Scenes 4 and 5

Lies/ Honesty 3: Blanche writes a letter to Shep Huntleigh that is stuffed with little lies about her life. She admits to Stella in jest that she is a liar. Blanche sees these personal falsifications to be harmless white lies that simply complement her and help her self-confidence. Blanche's lies give her the life she dreams of living.

Lies/Honesty 4: Stanley mentions a man and place from Blanche's past and tests her honesty by asking about him. She tells him that she does not know him and would also never be seen in a hotel like the Flamingo. However, she is nervous and does know the things about which Stanley speaks, which implies that she is lying. Stanley knows the truth and so does Blanche.

Lies/Honesty 5: Blanche tells Stella that she wants to deceive Mitch into wanting her. She wants to affect someone else through a type of deception or lie. This lie will make Blanche feel better about herself.

Scenes 7 and 8

Lies/Honesty 6: Stanley tells Stella all of the dirty details on Blanche's past. Stella claims that they are all lies and he should not be spreading them. Stanley doesn't believe them to be lies, but Stella will not accept them as truth. He tries to show her that Blanche is the liar in this situation. Blanche is the one who has been hiding the truth from her sister.

Lies/Honesty 7: The rest of the information about Blanche is a second lie. Stanley says that Blanche lied about resigning from her teaching position. She was mixed up with a seventeen-year-old boy and was forced to leave town. Stella still will not believe Stanley's stories.

Lies/Honesty 8: When Blanche comes out of the bathroom, she can tell that Stanley has told Stella something disturbing about her. She feels the truth in the room. Stella tells a



white lie to Blanche to cover up her feelings. She tells Blanche that everything is all right, when it truly is not.

Scenes 9 and 10

Lies/Honesty 9: Stella tells Stanley that Blanche did not lie completely to Mitch. She may have lied about her past, but she never lied about her feelings. Her heart was always honest. Although Blanche may tell lies, she is emotionally honest with the people she cares about.

Lies/Honesty 10: Blanche lies again to Stanley, telling him that she received a wire from Shep Huntleigh inviting her to go on a Caribbean cruise. Stanley does not believe her, but goes along with her story anyway. Blanche seems to believe her lie and story so much that it becomes her truth.

Lies/Honesty 11: Blanche lies to Stanley to make herself feel and appear better than her present state allows. She tells Stanley that Mitch came by to apologize, but she turned him down. Stanley knows exactly where Mitch was at that time and can prove Blanche's lie. This confrontation leads to an argumentative and slightly violent standoff between the two in-laws.

Scene 11

Lies/Honesty 12: Blanche is packing her clothes to go on a vacation. She believes she will be traveling with Shep Huntleigh. Stella and Eunice tell her that she is vacationing in the country, which is a little white lie. They also go along with Blanche's delusions and lies for her benefit. This time *they* stretch the truth to help her, as opposed to changing the truth for personal gain.



Topic Tracking: Loneliness

Scene 1

Loneliness 1: Blanche cries to Stella that she cannot be left alone. She wants and needs to be near her sister, and cannot live alone in a hotel. This initial cry is not as overt throughout the rest of the play; however, Blanche's need for companionship is evident in all of her relationships.

Scenes 2 and 3

Loneliness 2: When Stanley touches her old love letters, Blanche becomes frantic and upset. Her loneliness is apparent as she speaks of her dead husband. She has had no special person in her life since his death, and yearns for that lost companionship.

Loneliness 3: Mitch is the only one of the four poker players who is not married. He intimates that he is lonely since all he has is his sick mother. When she dies, he will be left alone.

Loneliness 4: After Stella returns to Stanley's arms, Blanche once again is left alone on the steps of the house. Mitch arrives and offers her cigarettes and companionship. She tells him how much she needs that kindness. The kindness she looks for masks her loneliness.

Scenes 4 and 5

Loneliness 5: Blanche writes letters to Shep Huntleigh, her college sweetheart. She makes up facts about herself to verify the façade she presents to everyone. She also writes these letters to cover up for her loneliness. By writing to "friends," she doesn't have to sit alone in a house or think of her nonexistent list of friends.

Scene 6

Loneliness 6: Mitch comforts Blanche by telling her that he, too, is alone. He understands her feelings of loneliness and thinks that they can have each other. Together, they will no longer be lonely.

Scenes 7 and 8

Loneliness 7: Mitch does not attend Blanche's birthday dinner. She realizes that she is now truly alone and must cover up her sadness. Again, she presents the façade that she has many friends and is not lonely by saying that she has never been stood up. She does not want her sister to see her loneliness.

Loneliness 8: Stanley presents Blanche with a one-way bus ticket away from New Orleans. He is handing her a sentence for loneliness. Blanche has already said that



Stella is all Blanche has in the world. When she leaves Stella, she will have nothing and be completely alone.

Scenes 9 and 10

Loneliness 9: Blanche sees the Mexican woman selling flowers for the dead. She reminds Blanche of all the people she loved who have died and left her alone. The woman reaffirms Blanche's self-realization of her loneliness.

Scene 11

Loneliness 10: As the doctor escorts Blanche out of the house, she sees the kindness in his face. She associates kindness with the end of loneliness. The doctor instills strength in Blanche and does not force her to walk out of the house alone. Through the kindness and companionship of the doctor, she willingly walks out of the house.



Topic Tracking: Opposing Backgrounds

Scene 1

Opposing Backgrounds 1: Blanche arrives in New Orleans expecting a house similar to the one in which she and Stella were children. Her proper upbringing on the plantation of Belle Reve leaves her unexpectedly shocked at Stella's current house in Elysian Fields. She is dressed as if she was raised wealthy, and stands in a home that appears as if she was not raised properly. It is the home of her sister and brother-in-law and is her new home. She believes she is stepping down in class.

Opposing Backgrounds 2: Stella tells Blanche about Stanley's friends. She infers that they are not going anywhere in life. Their "type" is not the kind that Blanche and Stella are used to. This contrasting lifestyle stems from their distinct backgrounds. Stella and Blanche were raised on a plantation with money and society, while Stanley and his friends were poor and uneducated. Now the two classes are pushed together in the same world.

Opposing Backgrounds 3: When Blanche and Stanley meet, their opposite lifestyles and backgrounds are obvious. Stanley is sweaty, dirty, and rude, while Blanche is perfumed, well dressed, and soft-spoken. They both know that they are different and they torment one another because of their different backgrounds.

Scenes 2 and 3

Opposing Backgrounds 4: The backgrounds of Stanley and his friends are evident during the poker game. They curse, drink beer, and act violently. Mitch is the only one who displays some grace and courtesy. Blanche notices his distinction from the rest of the group.

Opposing Backgrounds 5: Blanche tells Mitch the origin of her name and talks of her French roots. She presents herself as having an excellent pedigree and strong, educated background. Mitch is in awe of her grace and presentation. It contrasts with the presentation of the poker players in the next room.

Scenes 4 and 5

Opposing Backgrounds 6: Blanche complains of the mess in the house. She tells Stella that she wants to help her escape. She says the house needs to be clean and she needs money in order to do so. She plans to call one of her old college beaux. She is used to cleanliness and maids, while Stella is living with Stanley in a dirty, old flat. Blanche wants to leave the poor home for luxury, while Stella is happy living in the flat with Stanley despite their meager lifestyle.



Opposing Backgrounds 7: Blanche illustrates her low opinion of Stanley through a descriptive image of a caveman. She thinks his background is common and he is violent and uneducated. She thinks Stella is too good for him.

Opposing Backgrounds 8: When Stanley mentions the Flamingo Hotel, Blanche replies that she would never be seen in it. That sort of establishment is too common, low, and base for a girl of her upbringing. She thinks herself too proper to associate with it.

Opposing Backgrounds 9: Blanche admits to pretending to give the impression of wealth. She tells Stella that she wants Mitch to want her. He thinks that she is proper and refined. She gives the impression that she is, secretly knowing that she is not. She needs to believe that she is in order to keep up her façade.

Scene 6

Opposing Backgrounds 10: As they get to know each other, Blanche and Mitch recognize their distinct backgrounds. Blanche speaks French while Mitch doesn't understand one word of it. Mitch talks about mundane things such as perspiration and gyms, while Blanche talks of education and foreign languages. They both give the impression of coming from different worlds as they speak with one another. Despite their opposing upbringings, they still enjoy one another and want to spend more time together. They share one thing that transcends class and background: loneliness.

Scenes 7 and 8

Opposing Backgrounds 11: Stanley informs Stella of Blanche's tawdry sexual history. He shows her that although Blanche believes she comes from a better background, she behaves to the contrary. She lives her life as if she had no education, no refinement, and no prudence. It's almost as she lives the background of Stanley that she so desperately thinks is unfit for Stella.

Opposing Backgrounds 12: Stanley reminds Stella of their opposing backgrounds, yet does not present it through the negative view that Blanche sees. He believes he saved Stella from an uptight, refined background and brought her to the colorful, common world. Both Stanley and Stella know they come from different worlds, but they have managed to make their own new world together.

Scene 11

Opposing Backgrounds 13: Blanche exits the house as she entered. She walks through the "common" poker game in a very refined, proper way. She tells them not to get up, and leaves. They continue to play poker. The opposing ways of life are evident in this final scene of the play. The poker players are still drunk and common, Stella is classy and concerned for her sister, Mitch stares at the table upset, and Stanley tries to woo his wife back to their previous ways. All the different upbringings, including those of the doctor and nurse, are mixed into this scene, representing a modern society.



Topic Tracking: Sexuality

Scene 1

Sexuality 1: Blanche sees that she will have no privacy while staying with Stella and Stanley. Privacy is necessary for changing, primping, and sexual relations. There will be no separation between the two rooms, so Blanche will be a part of Stella and Stanley's sexual relationship, in a way, while she is present. Blanche feels uncomfortable with the arrangement, but has little choice in changing the situation.

Sexuality 2: The photograph of Stanley as a military officer turns Stella on sexually. She voices her physical desire for him. This physical passion is one of their strongest ties in the relationship. Blanche is shocked to hear her sister speak so sexually about a man.

Scenes 2 and 3

Sexuality 3: Stanley breaks the news to Blanche that Stella is going to have a baby. Their baby is a direct product of their strong sexual desire for one another. They may not have the same upbringing, but they share the same passion. That passion produced a baby and shows Blanche that they have a strong relationship. The baby is the new common thread with Stella and Stanley, whereas Belle Reve was the old common thread between Stella and Blanche.

Sexuality 4: Blanche flirts with Mitch, flaunting her feminine sexuality. She pretends to make it pure and innocent. Sparks begin to fly between the two, and sexuality is at the core of the relationship. However, Blanche and Mitch do not see one another as sexually as Stella and Stanley see each other. They want companionship more than passion.

Sexuality 5: The strong passion that Stella and Stanley share is illustrated at the end of Scene Three. Stanley is screaming for his love, his baby, his Stella. She is angry with him for hitting her, but she returns to him. Her slow walk down the staircase and into his arms is full of sexual tension. They embrace and return to their room for sexual relations.

Scenes 4 and 5

Sexuality 6: Blanche cannot believe that Stella slept with Stanley that night after the fight. Stella is beaming from her evening and admits that she is thrilled by Stanley's sexual desires. The two sisters appear to hold opposite views on the issue of sexuality. However, Stella finds out the truth about Blanche's sexual history.

Sexuality 7: After Blanche tells Stella how low she thinks Stanley is on the social chain, Stanley walks into the house. They both worry that he overheard their conversation about him. Stella runs to him, embracing him sexually. Stanley winks at Blanche



inferring that he has control over Stella through his sexuality. Sexuality is what binds Stella and Stanley together.

Sexuality 8: Stanley leaves the house without kissing Stella on purpose. This lack of sexual contact illustrates the power he has over her. By withdrawing his kisses, he is withdrawing himself from Stella, in turn showing her how upset he is without using violence.

Sexuality 9: Blanche sees the young man collecting money for *The Evening Star*. She is very attracted to him sexually and tells him so. She seduces him into a kiss and then forces him to leave. She knows she cannot get mixed up with a young boy when she is a grown woman. This sexual desire seems to be a weakness for Blanche.

Scene 6

Sexuality 10: Mitch and Blanche have returned from a date on the town. He wants to kiss her but she turns him down. She, again, gives the impression that she is a virgin and is not worried about kissing, but about where kissing can lead. Mitch is frustrated, but still completely in awe of Blanche.

Sexuality 11: Blanche's story of her young husband's death does not involve their youthful sexuality. Instead, she tells about his homosexuality. She found him with an older man and told him how disgusted she was by his actions. His embarrassment or acceptance of his homosexual tendencies caused him to commit suicide.

Scenes 7 and 8

Sexuality 12: Stanley tells Stella about the information he found on Blanche's past. It revolves around sexuality. She lived in a cheap hotel where she sold sex and was involved with a seventeen-year-old boy from the high school in which she taught. Stella cannot believe the stories she hears from Stanley, but Stanley knows them to be true.

Sexuality 13: Stanley holds Stella and tries to remind of her of their strong passion. He tells her how amazing the nights were before Blanche arrived. Again, he uses sexuality as his mechanism of communication with Stella. Stella understands and does the same.

Scenes 9 and 10

Sexuality 14: Mitch comes to see Blanche after her birthday dinner. She admits to her sexual past. Mitch now wants his way with her sexually. She tells him that they must be married first. He tells her that she is too dirty to marry with her sexual past and leaves.

Sexuality 15: In their final standoff, Stanley and Blanche fight about her sexual past. She is afraid for her body and her self, thinking that he wants to have his way with her. Stanley tells her he would never touch her. In a fit of rage, he teases her saying that maybe she would be good in bed. He carries her away in the end of the scene without allowing the reader to know what happens.



Scene 11

Sexuality 16: As Blanche is taken away, Stella runs after her in tears. Stanley tries to comfort her and show her that everything will be alright. He does so by unbuttoning her blouse. This conclusion to the play illustrates how deeply their relationship is based on sexuality.



Topic Tracking: Violence

Scene 1

Violence 1: The play introduces Stanley and Stella with physicality. He throws a package of meat at her to cook. Instead of handing it to her gently, he throws it at her. This slightly violent exchange is the first vague image of their type of communication.

Violence 2: Blanche tells Stella how hard she worked for Belle Reve before she lost it. She uses violent terms such as "bled," "fought," and "died" as she taunts Stella for not being there. Although not physically violent, this conversation is verbally violent.

Scenes 2 and 3

Violence 3: During the poker game, Stanley slaps Stella on her thigh. He does this not to hurt her, but to convey some sort of affection. Stella does not like it. Again, their communication is physical and somewhat violent through throwing and slapping.

Violence 4: Stanley throws the radio through the window in a violent rage. Stella is angry, they fight, and he hits her. This time, their physical communication is purely violent. He does not beat her much; he hit her once. She leaves the house showing him that she will not tolerate such brutality.

Scenes 4 and 5

Violence 5: Stella tells Blanche about her wedding night with Stanley. He took the heel of her shoe and broke every light in the house in a passionate, violent rage. Stanley's violent side excites Stella and sometimes brings them closer, other times pushes them apart.

Violence 6: Steve and Eunice fight in the upstairs flat and someone is hit. At first we cannot see who the victim is. Their side-plot of perpetual fights and violent arguments parallels Stanley and Stella's world of repeated arguments and occasional violence in the downstairs flat.

Scene 6

Violence 7: Blanche tells Mitch about her husband's violent suicide. He put a gun in his mouth and shot himself. It was a clean death albeit self-inflicted, but still one of violence.

Scenes 7 and 8

Violence 8: At Blanche's birthday dinner, Stanley becomes angry and clears his table by smashing his plate and glass. He yells at the women saying that he is the King and that he will clean the table by smashing everything.

Scenes 9 and 10



Violence 9: In their final stand-off, Blanche grabs a glass bottle, breaks it, and shoves the jagged edge in Stanley's face in order to hurt him. He taunts her. They fight and he picks her up and carries her into the bedroom. She is on the same violent level as he has been for most of the play.

Scene 11

Violence 10: Blanche physically fights to pull away from the Doctor and Nurse who try to take her away. She struggles on the ground and they pin her down. She ultimately gives in as they show her kindness. She realizes she cannot fight with violence.



Scene 1

The play opens looking into a two story flat on Elysian Fields street in New Orleans. It is the home of Stanley and Stella Kowalski. They live on the bottom floor while Eunice and Steve Hubbell live upstairs. The neighborhood is a mixed-race community and is located between the L and N streetcar tracks. This area is teems with many pubs, bars and bowling alleys.

Stanley and his friend Mitch walk to the house looking for Stella. Stanley throws meat at Stella to cook and tells her that he is going bowling. She wants to come and watch him play. She leaves the stage to follow him.

Topic Tracking: Violence 1

Blanche Dubois walks onstage looking for her sister Stella. She has a suitcase and is very well dressed. She is shocked at the poor appearance of the house and asks the Negro woman and Eunice if this is the home of Stella Dubois now known as Mrs. Stanley Kowalski. Eunice tells her that Stella is at the bowling alley with her husband. Eunice makes small talk with Blanche who informs her that she is an English teacher from Mississippi. Blanche walks inside, exhausted, and kindly tries to get rid of Eunice. Eunice leaves to go to the Bowling alley to bring Stella home.

Topic Tracking: Opposing Backgrounds 1

Blanche looks around at the home in disgust. She finds some whiskey and begins drinking until Stella comes home. They embrace joyfully as Blanche cries, "Stella, oh, Stella, Stella! Stella for Star!" Scene 1, pg. 152. Blanche begins to chatter consistently about her appearance, how she needs low light, how she feels terrible that Stella is living in such a horrible place, and continuously makes excuses about herself. She finally asks Stella how she is doing and why she hasn't said a word. Stella replies, "You haven't given me a chance to, honey!" Scene 1, pg. 153. Stella tries to get a few words in the conversation, but Blanche dominates it and asks discreetly for some liquor. She justifies her actions by reminding her sister that she is not a drunk, but that her nerves are shot tonight. She repeatedly asks Stella why she lives in a place that is like something out of an Edgar Allen Poe poem.

The two sisters continue their conversation about why Stella lives in this broken-down old place, how Blanche looks, and why she has arrived in New Orleans. Stella is not intrusive and assumes that Blanche will explain in due time why she left school early and why she came to New Orleans for an indefinite time. Stella tells Blanche that there are only two rooms and she will be sleeping on a small pullout bed separated only by a curtain. Blanche is worried about privacy with Stanley in the next room.

Topic Tracking: Sexuality 1



Stella hasn't told Stanley that Blanche is coming to New Orleans to visit. Blanche is worried that she will be seen as the visiting in-law and hopes to get along with their friends. Stella says, "I'm afraid you won't think they are lovely...They're a mixed lot...." Scene 1, pg. 155. Blanche is also worried about getting put up at a hotel. She tells Stella, "I want to be *near* you, got to be *with* somebody, I *can't* be *alone*!" Scene 1, pg. 156. Stella is worried about Blanche because of her nerves, her fear of being alone and of being around light, and her obsession with her looks. She always is kind to Blanche, despite Blanche's harsh words.

Topic Tracking: Opposing Backgrounds 2

Topic Tracking: Loneliness 1

Stella shows Blanche a picture of Stanley, telling him that he was a Master Sergeant in the Engineer's Corps and that he is from Poland. She voices her sexual desire for Stanley, which shocks Blanche.

Topic Tracking: Sexuality 2

Blanche tells Stella that she lost Belle Reve, their childhood home. She is very defensive and loses control as she tries to explain what happened. She is unsure of the exact reason and cause of the loss. She turns on Stella for leaving Mississippi while she stayed behind to help. "But you are the one that abandoned Belle Reve, not I! I stayed and fought for it, bled for it, almost died for it!" Scene 1, pg. 157.

Topic Tracking: Violence 2

Those words make Stella cry and she runs into the bathroom to fix herself. While she is gone, Stanley comes home, recognizing Blanche. The two are from obviously different social levels. They introduce one another and chat for a few minutes as Stanley looks for Stella. He asks Blanche about her past relationships and marriage. Blanche responds that she was married once, but her young husband died.

Topic Tracking: Opposing Backgrounds 3



Scene 2

The evening following Blanche's arrival, Stanley and his crew plan to hold a poker party in the kitchen of the house. Stella and Stanley talk about Blanche and the loss of Belle Reve while Blanche is bathing in the bathroom. He is upset over the loss of property and asks Stella what happened, but she says she doesn't know. He explains the Napoleonic Code to her: *"In the state of Louisiana we have the Napoleonic code according to which what belongs to the wife belongs to the husband and vice versa."* Scene 2, pg. 163-64

Stanley is upset at the possibility of Stella being swindled by Blanche and believes he too is being swindled. He wants to see some legal documents, so he tears open Blanche's trunk searching for a deed or proof of ownership. He mocks all of her pearls and furs. Stella defends her sister by saying that appearances and clothes are Blanche's weakness. She also says that Blanche has owned all of the rich things for years and that they were given to her by old admirers. Stanley still suspects foul play.

Topic Tracking: Lies/Honesty 1

Stella goes offstage onto the porch as Blanche comes onstage out of the bathroom, and sees Stanley alone. Stanley begins to approach her bluntly, asking her about Belle Reve. Blanche is uncomfortable changing her clothes with Stanley in her presence, but she continues to change out of fear of his harsh language. They argue and Stella comes onstage to stop the quarrel. Blanche quickly tells her to leave them be and for her to go to the store to get a coke. She leaves and Blanche and Stanley are left alone onstage once again to argue. Stanley tries to abide by Stella's orders to treat her well and compliment her. She flirts with him because it is her method of communicating.

"I know I fib a good deal. After all, a woman's charm is fifty per cent illusion, but when a thing is important I tell the truth, and this is the truth: I haven't cheated my sister or you or anyone else as long as I have lived." Scene 2, pg. 167.

Topic Tracking: Lies/Honesty 2

Stanley asks more about Belle Reve. Blanche finds all of the paperwork regarding the plantation and gives it to him. He spots other papers and inquires to what they are. She responds, "These are love-letters, yellowing with antiquity, all from one boy....Poems a dead boy wrote. I hurt him the way that you would like to hurt me, but you can't! I'm not young and vulnerable any more. But my young husband was...." Scene 2, pg. 168.

Topic Tracking: Loneliness 2

Blanche is very disturbed by the remembrance of her husband and immediately returns to the discussion of Belle Reve. They both realize that it was lost on a mortgage. Stanley says that he will have one of his lawyer acquaintances check up on the papers. He is very suspicious of Blanche and blurts out the secret that Stella is pregnant.



Blanche is shocked, but becomes tender in her speech. Stella comes back onstage with Blanche's coke and they embrace. Stella is upset with Stanley for telling Blanche about her pregnancy the way he did. The two sisters leave for a dinner at Galatoire's while Stanley prepares for his poker game.

Topic Tracking: Sexuality 3



Scene 3

The poker game is in progress with Stanley, Steve, Mitch, and Pablo. The kitchen has been transformed into a colorful playground for men. Beer bottles and whiskey glasses are strewn everywhere. They play cards, drink, and quarrel along the way. Mitch complains that he must get home to his sick mother. Everyone else is married and she is all that he's got left. So, he deals himself out and goes to the bathroom quickly before he leaves.

Topic Tracking: Opposing Backgrounds 4

Topic Tracking: Loneliness 3

Stella and Blanche walk onstage through the kitchen. Blanche is nervous and worried about her appearance again as Stella continually supports and compliments her. Following her typical upper-class behavior, she tells the poker players not to get up. They do not even notice her presence. She tries to integrate herself with the men; but Stanley rudely kicks the women out, slapping Stella on her thigh. She is upset when he acts that way in front of people.

Topic Tracking: Violence 3

Blanche wants to bathe again, so she knocks on the bathroom door. Mitch exits. The two share a glance, introduce one another, and begin to talk. He returns to the poker game.

Blanche asks Stella about Mitch and whether his job is a good one, to which she responds, "No. Stanley's the only one of his crowd that's likely to get anywhere." Scene 3, pg. 174. Blanche is standing in the light and moves from it when Stella tells her so-- she immediately moves back into the darkness. Blanche turns on the radio and begins to dance to a rumba that is playing. Steve tells Stanley to let the girls listen to music and enjoy themselves. Stanley won't allow it.

Mitch looks through the curtain to Blanche with awe. He excuses himself to return to the bathroom where he bumps into Blanche again and they begin to talk. They smoke cigarettes and discuss his silver inscribed cigarette case that was given to him by an old, deceased girlfriend. It has the words of a Browning sonnet inscribed inside: "And if God choose, / I shall but love thee better - after - death!" Scene 3, pg. 176. The two begin to talk about lost loves and names and Mitch tells the poker players that he is talking to Blanche and to deal him out. She tells him the origins of her name, which she treasures. "It's a French name. It means woods and Blanche means white, so the two together mean white woods. Like an orchard in spring!" Scene 3, pg. 176-77

Mitch listens to her speak with adoration as she tells him of her profession as an old maid English teacher. He flatters her and sparks begin to fly. She tells him that she cannot stand the naked light and proceeds to place a Chinese colored paper lamp cover over the light in the room.



Topic Tracking: Opposing Backgrounds 5

Topic Tracking: Sexuality 4

Stella comes onstage out of the bathroom to see the two speaking. Blanche now turns on the radio again. Stanley screams at them to turn it off. They don't abide and a quarrel begins. Stanley turns it off and Blanche turns it on, and so on. Stanley charges into the room rips out the radio and throws it out the window. Stella is outraged and tells all the men to leave. Stanley is still drunk and upset and follows Stella outside where he hits her. Blanche is in shock, especially because Stella is pregnant. The men try to pull Stanley away, calming him down by placing him under cold shower water. Mitch leaves the stage saying, "Poker shouldn't be played in a house with women." Scene 3, pg. 178. Stella wants to leave so Blanche takes her upstairs to Eunice's to stay. Blanche is outraged and still in shock at Stanley's vulgar brutality. The men leave Stanley under the shower and exit the stage. Stanley walks hopelessly to the foot of the stairs in tears screaming, "Stella! My baby doll's left me!.... I want my baby!... Stella!... Stella!" Scene 3, pg. 179. Eunice screams down to him that she's not coming home. Stella slowly walks down the stairs to Stanley where they share teary glances. He picks her up and carries her back into the house.

Topic Tracking: Violence 4

Topic Tracking: Sexuality 5

Blanche looks for Stella but cannot find her. She cannot believe that Stella would go back to Stanley after the fight. Mitch comes to the stairs, sees her, and offers her a cigarette. She responds, "Thank you for being so kind! I need kindness now." Scene 3, pg. 181.

Topic Tracking: Loneliness 4



Scene 4

Blanche walks onstage as she comes down the stairs from Eunice's flat the morning after the poker game and fight. She has not slept and is very nervous. She sees Stella happily relaxed in bed and sits down next to her. Blanche asks Stella how she could sleep with Stanley after what happened that night. Stella defends her husband by saying that he was drunk. "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." Scene 4, pg. 183. Blanche still cannot accept Stanley's form of apology and is upset with Stella. Stella tells her that his physical vigor and excitement thrill her. She tells her that on their wedding night he took her shoe and smashed all the light bulbs with the heel.

Topic Tracking: Violence 5

Topic Tracking: Sexuality 6

Blanche tries to tell Stella to face the facts that Stanley is a madman and an animal and a commoner. Stella does not listen to Blanche and begins to clean the mess from the previous evening. Blanche gets upset with her for picking up a broom and claims that they need money to get out of the poor house in New Orleans. Blanche comes up with the idea to call one of her old beaux from college, Shep Huntleigh, to loan them money to set up a shop. She tries to call him through the operator to send a telegram. Stella laughs at this idea for she is happy with Stanley. Blanche is frustrated with this direct approach of pleading for money. Stella inquires how Blanche got so low on funds and then gives her half of the ten dollars Stanley gave her that morning to smooth things over from the fight.

Topic Tracking: Opposing Backgrounds 6

Blanche continues to think of a way to get the two of them away. However, Stella tells her that "You take it for granted that I am in something that I want to get out of." Scene 4, pg. 187. Blanche tells her that she cannot continue to live in that house as a burden and so near Stanley's violence. They bicker and Blanche finally explains to Stella what she thinks of Stanley and why she should leave him.

"He acts like an animal, has an animal's habits! Eats like one, moves like one, talks like one! There's even something -sub-human-something not quite to the stage of humanity yet! Yes, something - ape-like about him....Thousands and thousands of years have passed him right by, and there he is - Stanley Kowalski - survivor of the stone age!...And you - you here - waiting for him! Maybe he'll strike you or maybe grunt and kiss you! That is, if kisses have been discovered yet!" Scene 4, pg. 188

Topic Tracking: Opposing Backgrounds 7

As Blanche is voicing her tirade to Stella, Stanley comes home and overhears it. He doesn't like Blanche either. He enters the house and Stella runs to greet him with a hug as he smirks at Blanche from behind.

Topic Tracking: Sexuality 7



Scene 5

Blanche is fanning herself as she writes a letter in the house. She laughs as she tells Stella how much of a liar she is as she writes the fictitious letter to Shep Huntleigh about visiting him and his millions in Dallas.

Topic Tracking: Lies/Honesty 3

Topic Tracking: Loneliness 5

Offstage Eunice and Steve argue upstairs about a blonde that he has been chasing around. Someone is hit and she runs down the stairs onto the stage threatening to call the police.

Topic Tracking: Violence 6

Stanley enters in his bowling outfit, asking what's going on. Stella laughs and says that Eunice left to get a drink at the Four Deuces. Steve shows up with a bruised forehead, running after her.

Blanche asks Stanley what sign he is born under, guessing Aries because they are forceful and like to bang things around. Stella says he was born five minutes after Christmas, to which Blanche states that he is a Capricorn, a goat. Stanley asks her what she is and she tells them that her birthday is next week and that she is a Virgo - virgin. He laughs and asks her if she knows a man named Shaw. Her face changes and she tries to cover up knowing him by responding in ignorance. Stanley tells her that his friend Shaw always goes into Laurel and believes that he knows her from a hotel called the Flamingo. Blanche responds that she would never be seen in an establishment with the reputation of the Hotel Flamingo. Her voice has a note of fear. Stanley walks offstage without kissing Stella.

Topic Tracking: Lies/Honesty 4

Topic Tracking: Opposing Backgrounds 8

Topic Tracking: Sexuality 8

Blanche is worried and asks Stella what she has heard about her. Her defenses come out as she tells Stella that her life was very hard after she lost Belle Reve and that her looks went away and she was not well. Stella tells her that she doesn't like to listen to her when she is in her morbid moods.

Stella gets the coke for Blanche and as she pours it into a cup, it spills on her dress. Blanche screams. Stella wonders why Blanche is acting so peculiarly and asks what is on her mind. They talk about Mitch and relationships. Blanche admits her feelings to Stella about Mitch: "What I mean is - he thinks I'm sort of - prim and proper, you know! I want to *deceive* him enough to make him - want me..." Scene 5, pg. 194. Stella asks Blanche if she honestly wants Mitch. Blanche doesn't respond and Stella leaves with



Stanley to get a drink at the Four Deuces. They kiss amiably before Stella walks offstage.

Topic Tracking: Lies/Honesty 5

Topic Tracking: Opposing Backgrounds 9

Blanche is left alone in the house. A young man collecting money for *The Evening Star* knocks on the door, surprising an upset Blanche. She teases him and then flirts with him, seeing his youthful beauty. He lights her cigarette. Seducing him for a kiss, she touches his face and lips before she forces him to leave. "Now run along, now, quickly! It would be nice to keep you, but I've got to be good - and keep my hands off children." Scene 5, pg. 196. Mitch arrives with a handful of roses after the boy exits the stage.

Topic Tracking: Sexuality 9

Scene 6

Mitch and Blanche return to the Elysian Fields building after an evening out. They walk outside the house and talk about the night with nervousness. Blanche apologizes for not entertaining Mitch as she should. She says that it is mandatory that the lady must entertain the gentleman. Mitch helps her find her keys to enter the house when she mentions packing her trunk to leave New Orleans. They look at the stars and Mitch asks to kiss her. She refuses him because of what a kiss can lead to. "[Y]ou know as well as I do that a single girl, a girl alone in the world, has got to keep a firm hold on her emotions or she'll be lost!" Scene 6, pg. 198. The two realize that they are alone in the house and enter freely. Mitch is in awe of Blanche's unique personality that acts exactly as she pleases.

Topic Tracking: Sexuality 10

In the first room, Blanche looks for liquor to drink for herself and also offer to Mitch. Speaking French, Blanche tries to cover for her tipsy behavior, keeping Mitch obsessed with her every move. They sit down and Blanche asks Mitch to take off his jacket. He tells her that he doesn't care to because he perspires an excessive amount. They talk about perspiration, clothing, and body builds. Mitch works out a lot at the New Orleans Athletic Club. He asks Blanche to punch him in the stomach to show off his muscles. Mitch lifts her off the ground when she tells him to guess her weight. She asks him to unhand her.

Topic Tracking: Opposing Backgrounds 10

They continue to talk about little things and then Blanche compliments Mitch on his gentleman-like behavior.

"You're a natural gentleman, one of the very few that are left in the world. I don't want you to think that I am severe and old maid schoolteacherish or anything like that....I guess it is just that I have - old-fashioned ideals!" Scene 6, pg. 201

The two are uncomfortable for a moment until they talk about Stanley and Stella. They talk about how Stanley and Mitch became friends and how Stanley and Blanche don't get along. Blanche tells him that Stanley is rude and goes out of his way to offend her. She complains to Mitch about Stanley and tells him that she is only in New Orleans for the summer because she didn't save much of her meager teacher salary last year. She must put up with her sister's husband and vice versa. Mitch doesn't believe that Stanley hates Blanche. He can hardly believe that anyone could hate her.

Mitch changes the subject to Blanche's age, which frightens her. He tells her that his mother is sick and would like to see him settled before she dies. The idea of death brings Blanche into a past world where her young husband died. She moves to the side of the stage to recite a long soliloquy about her past. She fell in love when she was sixteen. She says that the boy was not effeminate, but that there was some sensitive



quality about him that she couldn't pinpoint. They married anyway and were happy until she walked into a room and saw him with an older man. They later drove to Moon Lake Casino where they drank and danced and had a wonderful time. On the dance floor she told him that she saw him with the man and that he disgusted her. The boy ran outside and shot himself in the mouth. Since that night, Blanche cannot be around light.

Topic Tracking: Violence 7

Topic Tracking: Sexuality 11

Mitch comforts Blanche, trying to embrace her. He says, "You need somebody. And I need somebody, too. Could it be - you and me, Blanche?" Scene 6, pg. 204. They embrace as the polka tune that repeats in her head returns. She begins to sob in Mitch's arms.

Topic Tracking: Loneliness 6

Scene 7

Blanche is offstage in the bathroom soaking in a hot tub. Stella is setting the table for her birthday party. Stanley enters the kitchen, upset with the celebration, and tells Stella of the news he has found out about her sister. Stella does not want to hear anything bad, so she continually pushes him away and asks him to be kind to Blanche.

Blanche is singing from the bathroom and can be heard by the two in the kitchen. Stanley tells Stella that Blanche has been lying to both Mitch and them. He has a friend who travels through Laurel all the time and knows exactly the reputation that Blanche has earned. She lived at a second-rate hotel called the Flamingo where she visited with so many men that the management asked her to leave. She showed up in New Orleans just a few weeks later to stay with Stella. Mitch thinks that she has only been kissed by men, but Stanley knows he is mistaken. Stella claims that these facts are all lies while Stanley asserts that they are backed up by many sources.

Topic Tracking: Lies/Honesty 6

Topic Tracking: Opposing Backgrounds 11

Topic Tracking: Sexuality 12

"The trouble with Dame Blanche was that she couldn't put on her act any more in Laurel! They got wised up after two or three dates with her and then they quit, and she goes on to another, the same old line, same old act, same old hooey! But the town was too small for this to go on forever! And as time went by she became a town character. Regarded as not just different but downright loco-nuts." Scene 7, pg. 207

Stella cannot listen to Stanley say such horrible things about her sister. He continues to tell her about the second lie she has been telling people. She did not resign from her teaching position. She was fired because she got mixed up with a seventeen-year-old boy and she was forced to leave town.

Topic Tracking: Lies/Honesty 7

Blanche sticks her head out of the bathroom asking for another towel. Stella gets it for her and Stanley picks an argument. She goes back in the bathroom to finish as Stella reprimands Stanley for talking about those rumors. She tells Stanley about Blanche's young husband who died.

Stella puts candles on the cake, stopping at twenty-five as she always does (she doesn't want too many candles on the cake) and tells Stanley that Mitch is coming over for dinner. Stanley tells her that he told Mitch what he learned about Blanche and he won't be coming over. He also says that he bought her a bus ticket for Tuesday to leave. Stella is furious and asks Stanley what Blanche will do, to which he responds, "Her future is mapped out for her." Scene 7, pg. 210.



Blanche comes out of the bathroom and Stanley storms in. Only Stella and Blanche are left onstage. She realizes something is wrong and asks Stella if everything is ok. Stella says she is fine, but Blanche can tell something is wrong.

Topic Tracking: Lies/Honesty 8



Scene 8

Stanley, Blanche, and Stella are seated at the kitchen table having a birthday dinner for Blanche. The fourth seat meant for Mitch is vacant. Blanche tries to cover up the melancholy by talking a lot and saying that this is the first time in her entire life she has ever been stood up by a man.

Topic Tracking: Loneliness 7

She asks Stanley to tell a story to break the ice. He refuses. Blanche decides to tell a story and Stella supports her. She tells a parrot story with a little punch line that Stanley ignores and Stella feigns laughter.

Stella comments that Stanley is making a pig of himself with the greasy food at the table. Stanley throws his plate down onto the floor. "That's how I'll clear the table!" Scene 8, pg. 212. He erupts by stating that he is the king, and storms out of the room.

Topic Tracking: Violence 8

Blanche is worried and asks Stella what happened earlier while she was in the bathroom. She thinks it was something about Mitch and why he didn't come. She plans to call him on the phone to find out. Stella dissuades her from doing so, but she calls and leaves a message for him anyway. Stanley grabs Stella lovingly telling her that everything will be fine as soon as Blanche leaves. Everyone goes back to the room to light Blanche's candles. Blanche tells her not to light them. She thinks candles should be saved for babies' birthdays.

Topic Tracking: Sexuality 13

Blanche complains that she shouldn't have called Mitch. Stanley complains about the steam in the bathroom. Blanche complains that she apologized three times already. Stella is quiet and in pain. Stanley presents Blanche with her birthday present. It is a bus ticket back to Laurel for Tuesday. She is shocked and runs offstage coughing, gagging, and crying.

Topic Tracking: Loneliness 8

Stella is angry with Stanley for being so cruel to Blanche. She tries to explain Blanche to Stanley by describing their youth. She tells him that she used to be so kind and trusting, but men like Stanley forced her to change into her present state. The two fight a little more and Stanley reminds Stella of their love, their passion.

"When we first met, me and you, you thought I was common. How right you was, baby. I was common as dirt. You showed me the snapshot of the place with the columns. I pulled you down off them columns and how you loved it, having them colored lights going! And wasn't we happy together, wasn't it all okay till she showed here?" Scene 8, pg. 215

Topic Tracking: Opposing Backgrounds 12

Stanley continues his pleadings and Stella pulls away. She returns to him in pain asking him to take her to the hospital. They walk offstage as Stanley supports her with love.

Scene 9

Blanche is hunched over in a corner of the bedroom in the evening of her birthday. She is drinking. Mitch comes by the house. Blanche invites him inside, covering up her drunk state, telling him that she shouldn't let him in after he stood her up for dinner, secretly knowing that she is the one in trouble. She offers him a drink, but he declines saying that he doesn't want Stanley's liquor. She tells him that some of the liquor is hers and that not everything in the house belongs to Stan. Mitch is somewhat confrontational with Blanche, witnessing her delusions. She keeps hearing a polka tune and a shot. She is used to hearing these sounds in her head. Mitch thinks she is extremely drunk.

He tells her he doesn't want to see her again. She pretends to not hear any of his words and continues to look for a drink and tell him how much she has helped in the house. Mitch erupts by turning on the lights and crying, "It's dark in here....I don't think I ever seen you in the light....What it means is I've never had a real good look at you...." Scene 9, pg. 218. He pushes her face under a bright light, saying that she is older than he thought. They fight about stories he heard from Stanley, and Mitch says that he didn't want to believe them. But, he checked up on them, too, and found out everything he heard about her is true. She admits to all of the rumors.

"Yes, I had many intimacies with strangers....So I came here. There was nowhere else I could go. I was played out....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!" Scene 9, pg. 219-20

Mitch is angry that she lied to him. She claims she never lied to him about her feelings. Her heart was always honest.

Topic Tracking: Lies/Honesty 9

An old Mexican woman comes around the corner selling flowers for the dead. This chanting sets the polka music off in Blanche's head again, bringing her back to a time in the past. She mutters lines that she heard when she was younger. The Mexican woman continues to chant "flowers for the dead" as Blanche thinks of all the people who have died.

Topic Tracking: Loneliness 9

Mitch comes behind her and places his hands on her waist wanting sexual relations. Blanche asks him to marry her if he wants that, to which he responds: "I don't think I want to marry you any more....You're not clean enough to bring in the house with my mother." Scene 9, pg. 221. Blanche is so horrified by Mitch's words that she screams at him to leave the house. She starts yelling "fire" until he runs away frightened.

Topic Tracking: Sexuality 14



Scene 10

Blanche is inside the house dressed in a feathery dress, fancy shoes, and a rhinestone tiara. She is looking into the mirror, mimicking lines as if she were speaking to a crowd of admirers. Stanley walks in, startling her. He has arrived from the hospital where Stella is in labor with their baby. They told him to go home to get some sleep since the baby won't come till morning.

Blanche tells him that while he was away she received a wire from Shep Huntleigh of Dallas inviting her to go on a Caribbean cruise on a yacht. She is packing to leave for it soon. Stanley humors her by going along with the story.

Topic Tracking: Lies/Honesty 10

He opens a beer bottle, pouring it over his face telling her that they should bury the hatchet between them. Stanley is so happy that he's having a baby that he puts on his special silk pajamas and tries to talk to Blanche. Blanche is very upset and bitter and tells Stanley that she has breeding and intelligence to offer. Those are excellent qualities and she feels rich to have them. She tells him that Mitch came by and she gave him his walking papers. She also said that he came back crawling with roses. Stanley told her that was a lie because he knows exactly where Mitch is and it wasn't with flowers. Stanley catches her in a lie asking if he came by before or after the wire from the millionaire. They begin to quarrel and Blanche tries to call the operator to get help from Shep Huntleigh. She says she's in danger. Stanley mocks her more by telling her that her outfit is a Mardi Gras costume.

Topic Tracking: Lies/Honesty 11

"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 are the Queen of the Nile! Sitting on your throne and swilling down my liquor!"

Scene 10, pg. 225-26

Blanche keeps trying to call the operator for help, realizing that it is not working. Stanley blocks her walking path and they continue to quarrel. He goes along with her saying that maybe she wouldn't be bad to play with. She runs to the kitchen and breaks a bottle, holding the jagged edge at his face as her dagger. He springs toward her, turning over the table, telling her that they've had it out for each other from the start. She screams and then sinks to her knees. Stanley picks her up and brings her to the bed, where he rapes her.

Topic Tracking: Violence 9

Topic Tracking: Sexuality 15



Scene 11

It is now several weeks after the incident with Stanley and Blanche. Stella is folding Blanche's clothes as she bathes. Eunice is helping her. The four men from the original poker game play in the kitchen loudly. Stella is very upset and wonders if she did the right thing. She says that she couldn't believe Blanche and continue to live with Stanley. Blanche sticks her head out of the bathroom and asks Stella to get specific clothes ready for her to wear and take a message from Shep Huntleigh if he calls. Stella says that Blanche thinks she is going on a vacation in the country.

Topic Tracking: Lies/Honesty 12

Eunice and Stella are very gentle and kind with Blanche as she gets ready and talks of finally getting out of the trap in New Orleans. They offer her grapes from the French Market that she hopes are washed. She daydreams about dying of an unwashed grape near the sea.

The doorbell rings and a doctor and nurse wait outside. They are at the house to pick up Blanche to take her to a mental hospital. Stella is frightened and very upset. Blanche still thinks that she is to be picked up by Shep. Eunice goes to the door to tell them to wait. Blanche doesn't want to walk through the poker game, but she does so with Stella. She repeats the same lines she said at the original poker party as she passes through. The polka tune continues to play in her head.

Topic Tracking: Opposing Backgrounds 13

When she gets to the door, she is confused because the man is not Shep. She backs up frightened, running back into the house, screaming, trying to defend herself from the nurse and doctor. Mitch stares down at his hands while Stella closes her eyes in pain. Stanley tries to help the matron and doctor take Blanche away. Blanche keeps telling them that she forgot something so she can remain in the house. Stella wonders if she did the right thing for her sister. Eunice comforts her by saying that she had nowhere else to go. The matron asks the doctor if she should use a straight jacket. He says no and takes off his hat to become a kind man. He offers her his hand and she takes it, walking out of the house, slowly. She says, "Whoever you are - I have always depended on the kindness of strangers." Scene 11, pg. 235. They walk away.

Topic Tracking: Violence 10

Topic Tracking: Loneliness 10

Stella runs after her and Stanley runs after Stella. He comforts her, pleased that this ordeal has concluded. He tries to unbutton her blouse.

Topic Tracking: Sexuality 16