

A Streetcar Named Desire
Reading Guide Questions

Write your answers on a separate sheet of paper.

Scene 1

1. What mood do the opening stage direction and setting description create? What effect is created with the music of the “blue piano”?
2. As the play begins, how is Stanley’s primitive nature revealed?
3. How is Stella described in the stage directions? How does she contrast with Stanley, aside from being female?
4. What is known about Blanche before she speaks her first line?
5. What is Blanche’s reaction when she reaches Stella’s home? How does she react to Eunice’s efforts to help her?
6. When Stella arrives home, Blanche tells her to turn off the overhead light. Why does she say this?
7. How is Blanche’s drinking problem introduced?
8. What reason does Blanche give for her arrival in New Orleans?
9. How does Blanche react to Stella’s apartment?
10. What does Blanche learn about Stanley before she meets him?
11. What has happened to Belle Reve?
12. When Stanley, Mitch and Steve return from bowling, what do they agree to do the next day?
13. What dramatic function do Steve and Eunice, as a couple, seem to serve?

Scene 2

1. Why is Stella taking Blanche out for the evening? What is Stanley’s reaction?
2. At the beginning of the scene, Blanche is taking a bath. Why? What is symbolic about this bath?
3. Why does Stella ask Stanley to understand and be nice to Blanche?
4. How does Stanley receive the news that Belle Reve has been lost?
5. Why does Stanley think that Blanche has “swindled” Stella?
6. How does Stanley react when Stella tells him to wait outside with her? Why do you think he acts this way?
7. What does Blanche have to say about truth and illusion?
8. How do Blanche and Stanley seem to feel about each other? Support your answer with evidence from the play.
9. How does Blanche interact with Stanley? What is she doing?
10. What does the appearance of the tamale vendor suggest at the end of the scene?

Scene 3

1. Describe the poker players. How is Mitch different from the other men?
2. Why and how does Stanley show his anger during the game?
3. Stella introduces Blanche to Mitch. What is Blanche’s immediate reaction to Mitch?
4. Explain Stella’s assessment of Stanley in relation to the other men.
5. How do the other men react to Mitch’s distraction and desire to quit the game?
6. When Stanley runs into the bedroom to turn off the music, why does he stop short at the sight of Blanche?
7. Explain the significance of Mitch’s silver cigarette case/

8. Blanche tells Mitch the meaning of her name. How is her name both ironic and symbolic?
9. What are some of the lies that Blanche tells Mitch?
10. Why does Blanche ask Mitch to place the paper lantern over the light bulb? What does the lantern symbolize, and what does covering the light bulb symbolize?
11. Why does Stanley throw the radio out the window? How does this affect the others?
12. Why do the men try to restrain Stanley?
13. What do the comments made by Eunice and by Mitch tell us about the relationship of Stanley and Stella?

Scene 4

1. Contrast Blanche and Stella's attitudes towards Stanley's violence.
2. How does Stella feel about Stanley's temper? How did she react to what he did on their wedding night?
3. How does Blanche offer to "save" Stella? What is Stella's reaction?
4. What is Blanche's attitude toward money? Explain.
5. How is Blanche's understanding of desire different from Stella's?
6. Describe the conversation Stanley overhears between Blanche and Stella. Give Stanley's reaction. How does Stella respond when Stanley enters the room? Why?

Scene 5

1. What does Blanche's letter to Shep Huntleigh reveal about her?
2. What is the significance of Stanley being a Capricorn (goat) and Blanche a Virgo (virgin)?
3. What has Stanley found out about Blanche's past in Laurel?
4. How does Blanche react when confronted with this situation?
5. Explain Blanche's statement that she doesn't show how much longer she can "turn the trick."
6. What does Blanche hope for in a relationship with Mitch?
7. How had Blanche deceived Mitch?
8. Why does the teenager come to the apartment? What happens between Blanche and him? What do we learn about Blanche from this encounter?
9. What is the purpose of Mitch's appearance at the end of this scene?

Scene 6

1. Why does Blanche seem depressed at the beginning of this scene?
2. Describe Blanche's behavior with Mitch. Why is this behavior ironic?
3. What does Blanche tell Mitch about life with Stanley, and what is Mitch's reaction?
4. Why does Mitch want to know Blanche's age?
5. What does Blanche tell Mitch about her past? Why does she confide in Mitch?
6. How does this incident in Blanche's past affect her present life?
7. How does Mitch respond to Blanche's secret about her past?
8. What might Blanche have meant in her last line of this scene?

Scene 7

1. What news does Stanley reveal about Blanche? How does Stella react to this news?
2. What is the irony of the song Blanche sings in the bathtub?
3. How does Stanley destroy Blanche's plans for her future? What are Stanley's plans for Blanche?

Scene 8

1. Describe the situation at the beginning of the scene.
2. What does Stella say that angers Stanley? What is Stanley's reaction? Why?
3. Why does Blanche try to phone Mitch?
4. What is Stanley's birthday present for Blanche, and why is it a cruel gift? How does Blanche respond?
5. What is Stanley's explanation for his actions towards Blanche?
6. How are life and death juxtaposed at the end of this scene?

Scene 9

1. When and how does scene 9 begin?
2. What is the purpose of the playing of the polka tune, the "Varsouviana"?
3. The doorbell rings. Blanche discovers that it is Mitch. What does she do before she answers the door?
4. Describe Mitch's condition and Blanche's reaction.
5. How does Blanche try to deceive Mitch about the liquor? Why doesn't this work?
6. Why does Mitch destroy the paper lantern? How is this action symbolic?
7. What does Blanche say about realism and magic?
8. What upsets Mitch the most about Blanche? How did he verify the truth about her history?
9. Why is Blanche's comparison of herself to a "tarantula" ironic?

Scene 10

1. When does scene 10 begin? What is Blanche's condition? What is Stanley's condition?
2. Explain how tension is created with the appearance of Stanley?
3. How has Blanche fallen victim to her own illusions?
4. Why does Stanley get out his silk pajamas?
5. What lies does Blanche tell about Mitch? Why?
6. What is ironic about Blanche's statement that she cannot forgive Mitch?
7. How does Stanley further humiliate Blanche?

Scene 11

1. The scene opens to another poker night. How has Stanley's luck changed since the first poker night? How is this game symbolic?
2. What is Blanche's condition and how is Stella dealing with it?
3. What does Shep Huntleigh represent to Blanche?
4. How has Stella deluded herself? What is Eunice's advice to Stella?
5. How does Mitch seem to feel about Blanche at this point? Explain.
6. Cite evidence that Blanche seems to be obsessed with purity.
7. How is Stanley's tearing the paper lantern from the bulb significant?
8. What is the significance of Blanche's final line?
9. Cite evidence that a feeling of "continuation" is communicated at the end of the play.
10. How have lighting and sound effects helped establish the play's atmosphere throughout?