

AP English Literature and Composition
A Streetcar Named Desire Study Guide Questions

Scene 1

1. To what does the street name "Elysian Field" allude?
2. What is the relationship of the following characters: Stanley Kowalski, Stella Kowalski, Blanche Dubois, Eunice, Steve?
3. Describe the neighborhood in which Stanley and Stella live.
4. In what month does the play begin? What is the time period of this play?
5. What does Stanley throw at Stella? What does this say about his character?
6. How is Blanche dressed? How is she out of place in Elysian Fields?
7. Blanche's trip is described as taking "a streetcar named Desire, and then transfer to one called Cemeteries and ride six blocks and get off at—Elysian Fields." This foreshadows the progression of the play. What do the three symbolize?
8. Why does Blanche say "I've got to keep a hold of myself!"? What does this say about her character?
9. What literary device does Blanche use when describing the Kowalski's home? What can you infer about Blanche's standards from this description?
10. How many drinks does Blanche have in Scene One? How does this number compare to her professed limit?
11. From Stella's description of Stanley, what can you infer about their relationship?
12. What does Blanche reveal about her past at the end of Scene One?

Scene 2

1. Give an example of Williams' use of dialect. Who speaks in dialect?
2. What is the Napoleonic Code?
3. What does the early exchange between Stanley and Stella reveal about Stanley?
4. Williams sets up the major conflict between Blanche and Stanley in this scene. How do these two characters clash?
5. Blanche says "After all, a woman's charm is fifty per cent illusion". How does Blanche live to this ideal?
6. To what does Blanche blame the loss of Belle Reve?
7. Why are Stanley and Blanche so instantly antagonistic toward one another?
8. On what kind of note does the scene end?

Scene 3

1. How well is the poker game going for Stanley?
2. Why do you think Blanche bathes so frequently?
3. What does Blanche say her name means? Why is this ironic?
4. Why do you think Blanche "can't stand a naked light bulb, anymore than a rude remark or a vulgar action"?
5. What is the significance of the paper lantern? Why does Williams have Blanche introduce it when he does?
6. How does the first encounter between Mitch and Blanche foreshadow the development of their relationship?
7. What three lies does Blanche tell Mitch?
8. What does Stanley do to Stella? Is this the first time? How do you know?
9. How is Stanley animal-like in these final moments of the scene?

Scene 4

1. What is Blanche's plan of escape?
2. Why does Williams continually have Blanche remark about Stanley's physical nature? What is most likely being foreshadowed?
3. Explain the subtle innuendo in this exchange:

BLANCHE: What you are talking about is brutal desire - just Desire!-the name of that rattle-trap street-car that bangs through the Quarter, up one old narrow street and down another...

STELLA: Haven't you ever ridden on that street-car?

BLANCHE: It brought me here. Where I'm not wanted and where I'm ashamed to be...

4. What message is Stanley sending with his look toward Blanche at the end of this scene?

Scene 5

1. What does Stanley's comment, "you won't pick up nothing here you ain't heard before", tell the reader about his view of Blanche?
2. What month is it now? How long has Blanche been there?
3. Blanche discusses astrological signs. What sign does she think Stanley was born under and why? S
4. What sign does she say she was born under? How is this fitting to her image?
5. How does Blanche's body language show that she is hiding something at the mention of Shaw's name from Laurel?
6. Why does Blanche want to win Mitch over?
7. What does the scene with the young man say about Blanche's true self?
8. Why doesn't Blanche tell the truth of her situation to Shep Huntleigh in her correspondence?

Scene 6

1. What does Blanche mean by "a girl alone in the world, has got to keep a firm hold on her emotion or she'll be lost"?
2. Why does Blanche ask Mitch to sleep with her in French?
3. What does Blanche do when she tells Mitch that she has "old-fashioned ideals," that lets the reader know she is lying?
4. Blanche says, "He hates me. Or why else would he insult me? The first time I laid eyes on him I thought to myself, that man is my executioner! That man will destroy me, unless—". What does this mean?
5. Why did Blanche's marriage fail?
6. What happened to her husband?
7. What does Blanche mean when she says, "and the search light which had been turned on the world was turned off again and never for one moment since has there been any light that's stronger than this--kitchen--candle..."
8. What does Blanche mean by the last line of this scene?

Scene 7

1. As the scene begins, Blanche is taking yet another one of her frequent baths. Why does she bathe so much? What seems to be symbolic about her bathing?
2. What lies about Blanche does Stanley reveal in this scene?
3. What is the significance of Blanche's song?

4. Think back to the meaning of Blanche's name and her astrological sign. How are these now significant? Ironical?
5. With the new knowledge of Blanche's broken heart, has your opinion of her changed? How so? Or why not?
6. What does Stanley buy Blanche to ensure her departure?

Scene 8

1. Why is Stanley driven to violence at Blanche's birthday dinner?
2. Do you think Stanley would have acted this way if Blanche had never come?
3. Why is Stanley fighting so hard to get rid of Blanche? How has Blanche's presence changed his relationship with Stella?
4. What happens to Stella at the end of this scene?

Scene 9

1. The Varsouviana tune is mentioned again in this scene. Where else does this tune play?
2. How does the following quotation carry a deeper meaning: "You've stopped that polka tune that I've had caught in my head"?
3. Blanche says, "Something's the matter tonight, but never mind. I won't cross-examine the witness. I'll just—pretend I don't notice anything different about you"! How does this statement compare to her relationship with Allan?
4. Why is the Mexican woman selling funeral flowers? What does this represent?

Scene 10

1. Why does Blanche say, "But some things are not forgivable. Deliberate cruelty is not forgivable". How is this statement ironic?
2. Why does Blanche make up the story about Shep even after she knows Stanley won't believe her?
3. Notice that Blanche's shadow is a grotesque and menacing form. What does this say about her true feelings about herself?
4. What happens at the end of this scene?
5. Does this event change your perception of Blanche? Of Stanley?

Scene 11

1. How well is Stanley doing at this poker game?
2. Why is Stanley losing in scene 3 and winning now?
3. Blanche's comments about her jacket being "Della Robbia blue. The blue of the robe in the old Madonna pictures". What image does this present?
4. How does Blanche predict she will die? To what does this allude?
5. Stella tells Eunice, "I couldn't believe her story and go on living with Stanley". What is your feeling on this statement?
6. Think back to the progression of Blanche's trip: "Take a streetcar named Desire, transfer to one called Cemeteries and ride six blocks and get off at—Elysian Fields". How does the progression of the play follow this trip?