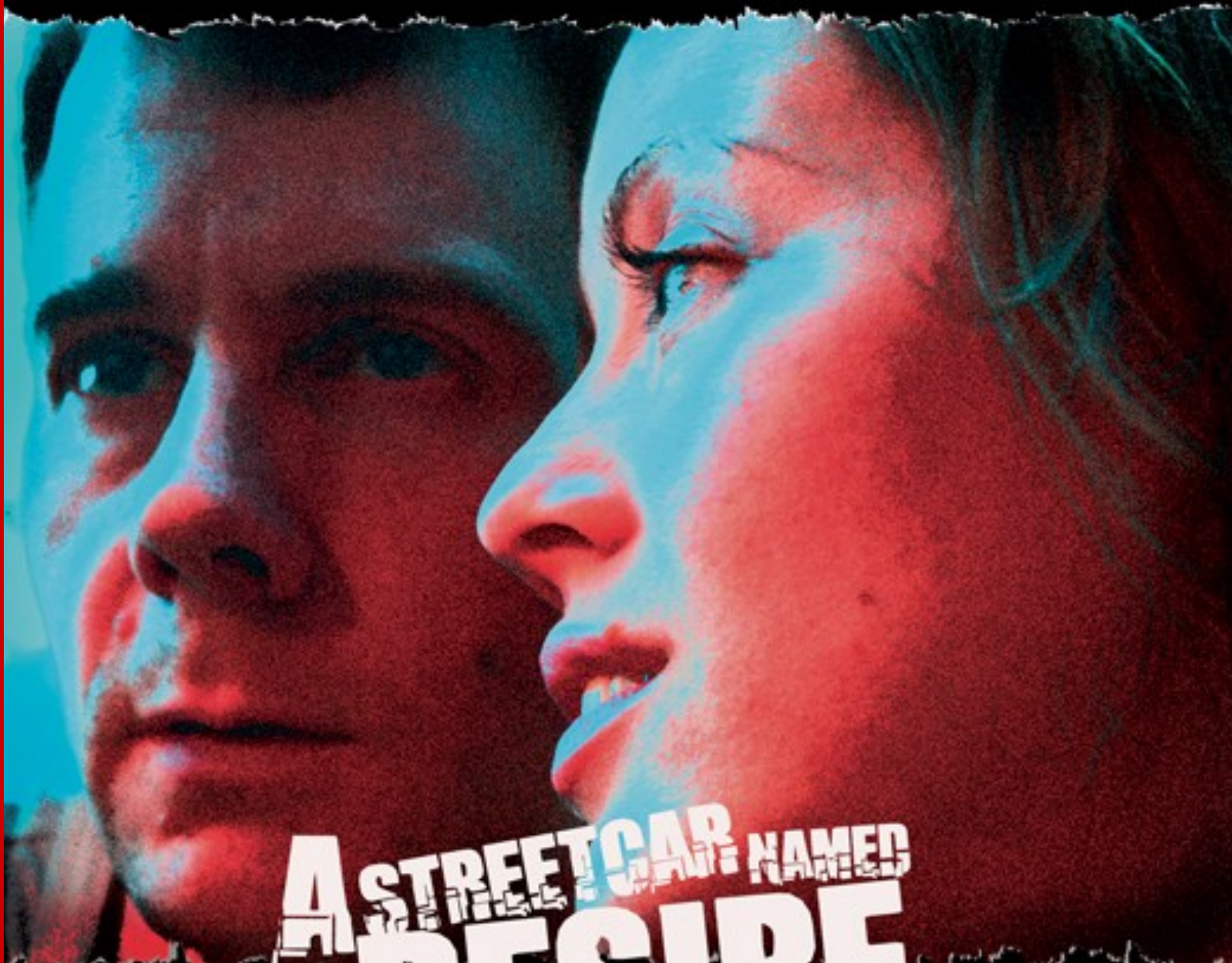


**FOURBLOKES THEATRE COMPANY**

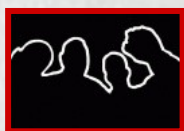
**PRESENTS**

**Tennessee Williams Legendary Stage Play:**



**A STREETCAR NAMED  
DESIRE**

**education pack**



[WWW.FOURLBOKES.COM](http://WWW.FOURLBOKES.COM)

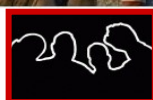
**The Guildhall Theatre, Derby  
17th - 20th November 2009**

*This play is presented by  
special arrangement with  
The University of the  
South, Tennessee, USA*

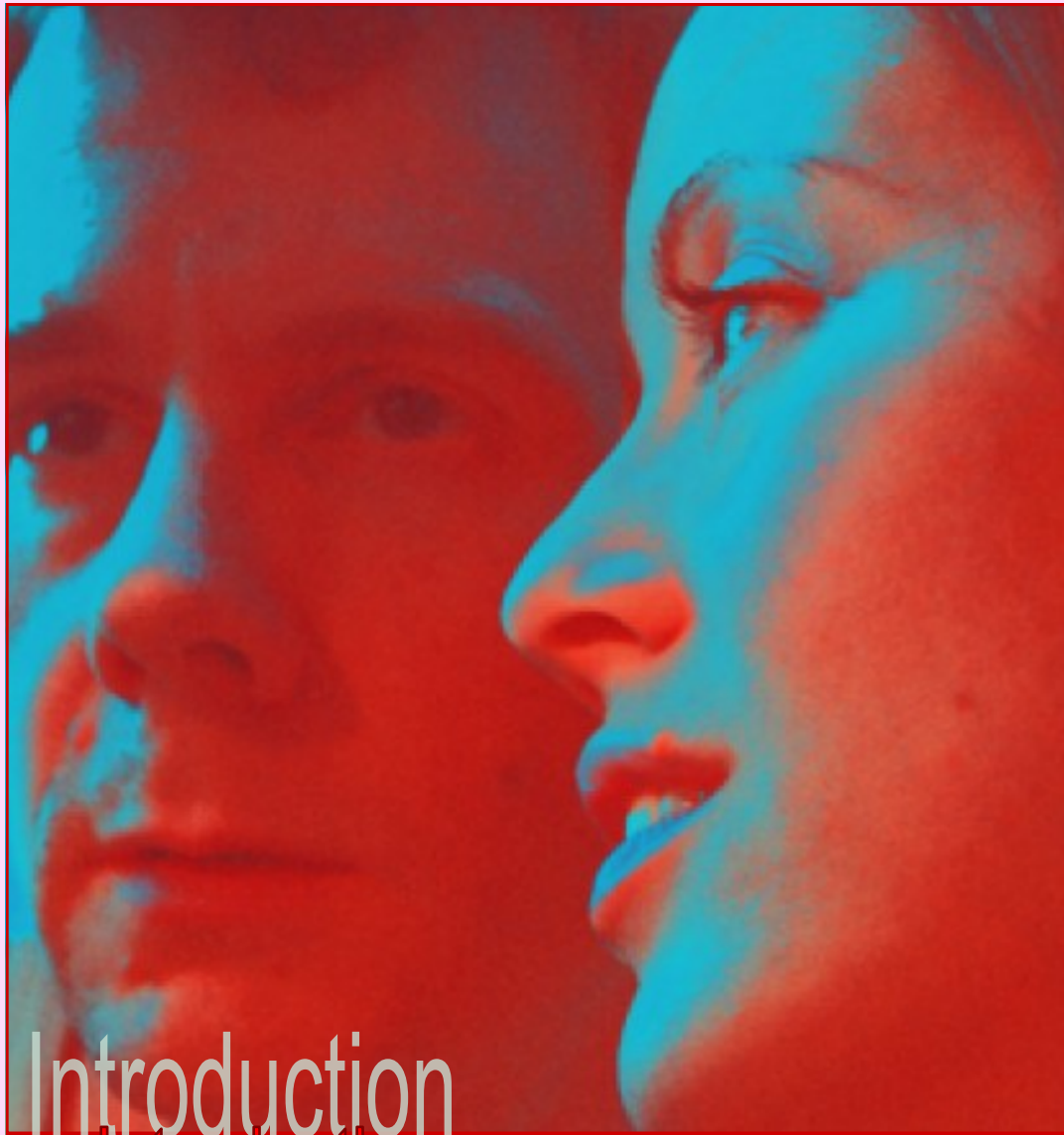
# **A STREETCAR NAMED DESIRE EDUCATION PACK**

## **Welcome to A STREETCAR NAMED DESIRE !**

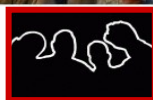
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**A STREETCAR NAMED DESIRE EDUCATION PACK**



Introduction  
Introduction



# **A STREETCAR NAMED DESIRE EDUCATION PACK**

## **Introduction**

Welcome to this Education Pack, which has been designed to support your visit to see the latest blockbuster from multi award-winning **FOURBLOKES** - Tennessee Williams' legendary stage play:

### **A STREETCAR NAMED DESIRE.**

You will also find helpful information about the company and the Production which is aimed at students of Drama, Theatre Studies, Performing Arts, and English.

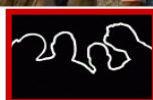
There are Drama and writing exercise 'quickies' for pre & post visit experience, to enable your students to tune in to the play, plus workshop exercises best used after seeing the play.

They can be a starting point for script realization, extended improvisation or a practical approach to post-show discussion, writing activities and analysis.

If you are interested in booking an informal post show Q & A session with the play's director and cast members - a popular innovation with our many school parties - please contact us by sending a quick email to: [\*\*info@fourblokes.com\*\*](mailto:info@fourblokes.com)

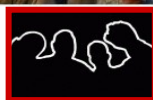


We hope you find this pack useful - any feedback from teachers and their students is greatly valued! **(See p34)**





Preparing students for the play  
Preparing students for the play



## A STREETCAR NAMED DESIRE EDUCATION PACK

### Preparing students

This production of **A STREETCAR NAMED DESIRE** aims to bring high quality live theatre to your students, tell a gripping story and stimulate debate about the play's themes. We feel, therefore, that it would be useful for students to have some preparation before seeing the show. This could simply be a case of getting them to think about what they are going to see.

- ♦ **What do they expect the play to be about?**
- ♦ **Why should their enjoyment expectations be high?**

The overview, synopsis and other background material that follows may well be helpful in this, but you as their teacher would make the decision as to whether they have read and fully studied the play beforehand.

### The Playwright and his 'Big Three'



**Tennessee Williams** is an American playwright famous for three big plays: **Glass Menagerie** in 1944, **A Streetcar Named Desire** in 1947, and **Cat on a Hot Tin Roof** in 1955.

If **The Glass Menagerie** propelled Williams to fame, **Streetcar** ensured that his name would never leave the ranks of the playwright elite.

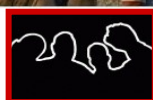
The play, which tells the story of an aging Southern belle's difficult relationship with her aggressive brother-in-law, was successful both commercially and critically. It opened in December of 1947 on Broadway and ran for over two full years, earning two Tony awards for the stage production and the 1948 Pulitzer Prize.



The initial Broadway cast is almost as famous as the play for one big reason:

**Marlon Brando.** (Whom you might know as **The Godfather**, but who was the Brad Pitt of his day when he was younger.)

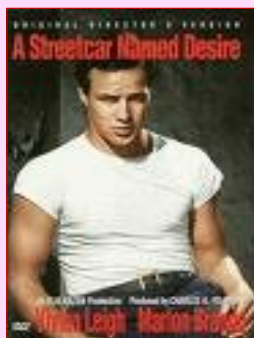
Virtually an unknown at the time of the play's casting, **Streetcar** propelled this young star to big-time fame after it was converted to a blockbuster movie in 1951.



## A STREETCAR NAMED DESIRE EDUCATION PACK



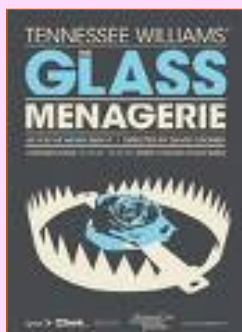
The only change from the Broadway cast was the role of Blanche DuBois, given in the film to then-famous **Vivian Leigh** (Scarlett from **Gone with the Wind**), so the film would have some star-power.



*Streetcar* really pushed the envelope of what was acceptable sexually in the 1940s, and Brando took the role of aggressive, macho Stanley Kowalski to the very edge (critic Arthur Miller aptly called him "a sexual terrorist, a tiger on the loose"). His performance was so memorable that many theatres to this day refuse to produce the play on the grounds that any actor trying to portray Stanley Kowalski would inevitably be written off as a lesser version of Brando.



Speaking of sexuality, *Streetcar* was censored when it was converted to film, like another Williams play, **Cat on a Hot Tin Roof**. Both plays include a gay man who, restricted by social boundaries in the 1940s and 50s, marries a woman. While this is a central part of *Cat*, it is a minor part of *Streetcar*.

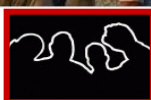


*Streetcar* also shares similarities with Williams's first big play, **Glass Menagerie**. *Streetcar*'s Blanche DuBois resembles Amanda Wingfield in *Glass Menagerie*; both are Southern belles who have difficulty moving past their outdated social ideals.

These common themes appear to be autobiographical for Williams, who was raised in Tennessee (hence the nickname) and grew up gay in a homophobic society. In fact, some believe that Williams based the character of Stanley Kowalski on a man named Pancho Rodriguez Gonzalez whom he was dating at the time.

Elia Kazan (who directed the original *Streetcar*) said of Tennessee Williams:

**"Everything in his life is in his plays, and everything in his plays is in his life."**



## A STREETCAR NAMED DESIRE EDUCATION PACK

### An overview of *Streetcar*

**Streetcar** has been called "*the finest single work yet created for the American theatre*" - and "*It packs such an emotional punch it can cut through a macho man's defences*". Well cast - and well directed - as it was by Elia Kazan in an innovative stage production featuring a sizzling script, sharply observed characterisation, jazz and special effects -- Tennessee Williams's ***A Streetcar Named Desire*** devastates audiences.

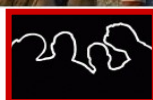
With innovative and widespread use of dramatic symbolism Williams creates compassion for a frightened, lonely, aging, southern belle, daughter of a previously well-to-do family, who is visiting her sister Stella and brother-in-law Stanley Kowalski in their cramped apartment in the French Quarter of New Orleans.

Romance with Mitch, a friend of Stanley's seems promising, but, as Blanche luxuriates in a hot bath offstage while singing "It wouldn't be make-believe if you believed in me," Stanley gives his wife the lowdown on her big sister who, after a disastrous marriage with a homosexual, has devoted her nights to casual sex. Stanley also tells Mitch the juicy details, thereby destroying Blanche's chance for eventual happiness. Later, after he has issued the ultimatum that penniless Blanche must leave her refuge and as her mental stability is tottering, Stanley rapes Blanche. Her future destroyed, Blanche, like Williams's beloved sister Rose in real life, is led off to an asylum.

(Previously, Williams had experimented with titles like: *Blanche's Chair in the Moon* and *The Poker Night*.) The paper lantern Blanche supplies to cover the light bulb serves to soften unpleasant truths about her age, her nerves, her situation. A Mexican woman sells "flores para los muertos" symbolically foretelling Blanche's fate.

Williams reveals Blanche's real prospects gradually. Blanche disguises her desperation with lies - about her drinking, her age, her reasons for coming to New Orleans, her sexual experience. Although she speaks of some of her losses early on - of the plantation and her relatives - only late in the play do we discover that she blames herself for her homosexual husband's suicide and that promiscuity much like his has cost her her reputation and her job.

Williams provides Stanley with many motives for hating Blanche. She drinks his booze, patronizes him, sponges off him - while complaining because Stella has no maid. She has lost Belle Reve. Her presence interferes with Stanley and Stella's sex life. Blanche competes with Stanley for Stella, offering to rescue her from him. Crucial is Blanche's tirade about Stanley being a subhuman ape. Stanley - eavesdropping - is stung by her contempt.



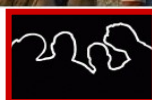
### An overview of *Streetcar* (cont.)

Yet Blanche is rarely rude. Whereas Stanley is no gentleman, Blanche is a gentlewoman - refined, fragile, sensitive. Her sexual purity, like her jewellery, is imitation, but her gentility is genuine. Pitiably, but not pitifully, she is felled by a "common" Polish-American He-man, a lusty barbarian, captain of the bowling team, an American version of Lady Chatterley's gardener. In part modelled on Williams's father, an aggressive, hard-drinking, poker player who damaged his son's self respect, Stanley is a stud who appeals to Williams but also repels him; he is not the character with whom the dramatist's greatest sympathies lie.

Williams appreciates Blanche's fears that her sexual "misconduct" will come to light because of his own early days as a closet homosexual. Like Williams, Blanche has furtive sexual encounters but, though she does not repress her desires, she also cannot suppress her guilt. When she enters the French Quarter, which could accept her earthier side, she is prevented by the values she embraced in her youth from acknowledging the desire which brought her there.

One of the most difficult ways to grow up female in the United States early in the twentieth century was to do so in impoverished circumstances in the deep south. Women of aristocratic lineage were expected to refrain from seeking most forms of employment - "A lady doesn't work" - although the teaching profession was an exception. And a lady must neither seek sex nor appear to enjoy it. As a woman of her period and place, Blanche was raised to trade upon her attractiveness. Yet when her apparently romantic marriage is destroyed by her conventional moral standards and then her own renegade sexuality flouts social strictures, she finds herself in turn the outcast who must deceive to survive.

Nowadays we regard rape not as a stud's right but as a reprehensible act of violence. We therefore can appreciate Stanley's attack on Blanche as completing the murder of her soul which he began when he decided to block her marriage to Mitch and throw her out of his home. (Sending her to a 'mental institution' afterwards is merely carting off the corpse to the cemetery to Stanley, although Stella and Mitch agonize at their complicity.) We can plainly see Blanche is terrified of Stanley, defends her honour with a broken bottle, is overpowered by him, and has a right to refuse him, whatever her sexual history may be.



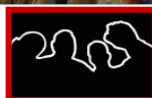
### An overview of *Streetcar* (cont.)

Not so in December 1947. When *Streetcar* opened it received enthusiastic but misguided reviews from critics - all men, incidentally - who regarded Blanche as a 19th-century fallen woman suffering punishment or, still worse, believed she went to bed with Stanley willingly. They described her as a prostitute or a nymphomaniac - a word not fashionable since women asserted their right to enjoy their sexuality - and spoke of her "affair" with Stanley and of the "strong attraction between them which is satisfied." Twenty-five years later few reviews misconstrued this event, and it was labelled rape.

*Streetcar's* early critics and its more recent interpreters likewise disagree about Blanche's sanity. Those writing in the late 1940s sometimes saw Blanche as deranged throughout the play. Now we are more likely to believe that until the play's end, when Blanche expects Shep Huntleigh, she does not confuse her pretences with reality. She knows the difference, but prefers lies to her sordid surroundings and the looming abyss.

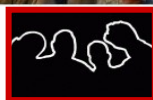
A victim of romantic clichés about life, Blanche is one of "the fugitive kind" seeking solace in "magic." Her self-image as a lady may be at odds with the sleazier details of her past, but it is also the source of strength which allows her to survive. Knowing she has been raped, having lost her sister's protection because she has told the truth - an ironic downfall for a "fibber" - Blanche maintains dignity in defeat. "Please don't get up," she enjoins the poker players on her exit. She does not delude herself about their rising because a lady has entered the room, for rise they do. Perhaps heroism in a hopeless situation and madness are much the same thing.

There seems little doubt that no small part of *Streetcar* mourns the loss of the 'civilised South', demonstrating in Williams's own words that "If we don't watch out, the apes will take over." As the author also remarked, "we are in the jungle with whatever we can work out for ourselves. It seems to me that the cards are stacked against us. The only victory is how we take it." So he sets up Blanche as a heart-wrenching sure loser, every card "stacked against" her, and she "takes it" with dignity as she is thrust once more upon "the kindness of strangers."





Themes & plots in Streetcar  
**Themes & plots in Streetcar**



## Major themes

### Fantasy/Illusion

Blanche dwells in illusion; fantasy is her primary means of self-defence, both against outside threats and against her own demons. But her deceits carry no trace of malice, but rather they come from her weakness and inability to confront the truth head-on. She sees the world not as it is but as it ought to be. Fantasy has a liberating magic that protects her from the tragedies she has had to endure. Throughout the play, Blanche's dependence on illusion is contrasted with Stanley's steadfast realism, and in the end it is Stanley and his standpoint that win. To survive, Stella must also resort to a kind of illusion, forcing herself to believe that Blanche's accusations against Stanley are false so that she can continue living with her husband.

### The Old South and the New South

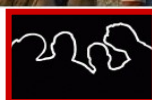
Stella and Blanche come from a world that is rapidly dying. Belle Reve, their family's ancestral plantation, has been lost, and the two sisters are the last living members of their family and, symbolically, of their old comfortable world. Their Old South was not conquered by the march of General Sherman's army, but by the steady march of time, and as Blanche's beauty fades with age so too do these vestiges of a civilization gone with the wind. Blanche attempts to stay back in the past but it is impossible, and Stella only survives by mixing her DuBois blood with the common stock of the Kowalskis; the old South can only live on in a diluted, bastardized form.

### Cruelty

The only unforgivable crime, according to Blanche, is deliberate cruelty. This sin is Stanley's specialty. His final assault against Blanche is a merciless attack against an already-beaten foe. Blanche, on the other hand, is dishonest but she never lies out of malice. Her cruelty is unintentional; often, she lies in a misguided effort to please. Throughout the play, we see the full range of cruelty. In Williams' plays, there are many ways to hurt someone. And some are worse than others.

### The Primitive and the Primal

Blanche often speaks of Stanley as ape-like and primitive. Stanley represents a very unrefined manhood; his appeal is clear: Stella cannot resist him, and even Blanche, though repulsed, is on some level drawn to him. Stanley's nature also includes a terrifying amorality; he has no qualms about driving his sister-in-law to madness, or raping her.



## Major themes (cont.)

Blanche finds Stanley's primitivism so threatening, precisely because it is something she sees, and hides, within her.

### Desire

Closely related to the theme above, desire is the central theme of the play. Blanche seeks to deny it, although we learn later in the play that desire is one of her driving motivations; her desires have caused her to be driven out of town. Physical desire, and not intellectual or spiritual intimacy, is the heart of Stella's and Stanley's relationship, but Williams makes it clear that this does not make their bond any weaker. Desire is also Blanche's undoing, because she cannot find a healthy way of dealing with her natural urges - she's always either trying to suppress them or pursuing them with no inhibition.

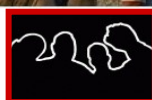
### Loneliness

The companion theme to desire is loneliness, and between these two extremes, Blanche is lost. She desperately seeks companionship and protection in the arms of strangers. And she has never recovered from her tragic and intense love for her first husband. Blanche is in need of a defender. But in New Orleans, she finds instead the predatory and merciless Stanley.

### Desire v Cemeteries / Romance v Realism

The fundamental tension of *Streetcar* is this play between the romantic and the realistic, played out in parallel in the pairing of lust and death. Blanche takes the streetcars named Desire and Cemeteries, and like the French's "la petite mort," those cars and the themes they symbolize run together to Blanche's final destination.

This dichotomy is present in nearly every element of the play, from the paired characterizations of Blanche the romantic and Stanley the realist, to how all of Blanche's previous sexual encounters are tangled up with death, and to the actual names of the streetcars.



## Plot analysis

### Classic Plot Analysis

*Most good stories start with a fundamental list of ingredients: the initial situation, conflict, complication, climax, suspense, denouement, and conclusion. Great writers sometimes shake up the recipe and add some spice.*

### Initial Situation

*"Meat!"*

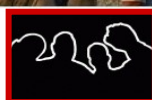
- ◆ The early interactions between Stella and her husband constitute the initial situation of ***A Streetcar Named Desire***. It's important for us as the reader/audience to see the status quo of the Kowalski's relationship before Blanche shows up and alters it for the duration of the play.

### Conflict

- ◆ Blanche arrives; something is up!
- ◆ The immediate physical incongruity of Blanche and her surroundings lets us know that she isn't going to fit in well here in New Orleans.
- ◆ Her first conversation with Stella hints at secrets she's trying to hide.
- ◆ And her first encounter with Stanley is wrought with tension, sexual and otherwise.
- ◆ All the news of the loss of Belle Reve doesn't help, either.

### Complication

- ◆ Blanche's relationship with Stanley grows more and more antagonistic, especially as Stanley learns more about Blanche's past in Laurel.
- ◆ Blanche and Stanley's relationship grows more and more difficult, with Blanche constantly insulting him, and Stanley becoming more angry and aggressive.
- ◆ Stanley also learns about Blanche's secret past, which he informs Stella and Mitch of.
- ◆ These multiple, small complications mean that the water gets muddier bit by bit as the play progresses, and every new complication adds a layer of intensity and emotional weight to the story.



## Plot analysis (cont.)

### Climax

Scene Ten - the rape

- ◆ Do you notice that Stanley says to Blanche, "We've had this date with each other from the beginning"
- ◆ We know that 1) Stanley doesn't like Blanche,  
2) he takes out his anger physically, and  
3) he's practically defined by his sexual aggression.
- ◆ This scene seems the inevitable result of their increasingly antagonistic relationship.

### Suspense

Already happened...

- ◆ In this play, the suspense stage can be found in Scene Ten with the Climax. The suspense builds as we watch Blanche interact with Stanley,
- ◆ make a frantic phone call, declare repeatedly that she's "caught in a trap," and try to run away.

Once the rape is over, we enter Scene Eleven without further suspense.

### Denouement

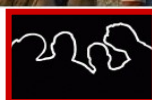
Scene Eleven

- ◆ With the rape and the birth of Stella and Stanley's child over and done with, the play's final scene has "falling action" written all over it.
- ◆ Blanche's descent into madness is complete, and we're now looking at the aftermath to the destruction that took place at the earlier climax.

### Conclusion

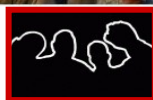
Stanley and Stella together

- ◆ Stella's reaction to Blanche's condition and story regarding her husband, and her decision to carry on her marriage in spite of it, constitute the play's conclusion.
- ◆ This is summed up nicely in the image of her on the porch with her baby in her arms, accepting comfort from her husband after her sister's just been carted off to an institution.





Drama activities  
**Drama activities**



### Extract from AQA GCSE DRAMA new specification (as for teaching from 2009 onwards):

#### 3.1.3 Section C: Study of a live theatre production seen

Candidates are expected to have studied, as part of their course, a production of live professional, or non-professional theatre.

It is helpful for candidates to follow theatre visits with practical workshop study.

In the Written Paper candidates will be given an opportunity to show their knowledge of how plays are constructed and realised. There will be opportunities for those with particular interests in performance, design or technical aspects of production to answer on those elements.

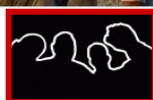
Productions must be of scripted plays. Candidates must have studied the play from a practical point of view and should be able to show their knowledge and understanding of the way in which the text was realised in the production.

Candidates are required to produce a personal response to various aspects of 'live' theatre productions seen during the course. Candidates must study the play before and after the theatre visit with practical workshops, whether their main interest is performance or design or technical skills.

Candidates should be able to demonstrate their understanding of performance or design or technical skills as well as their knowledge and understanding of the chosen live production from a performance perspective (AO1), and they should be able to analyse and evaluate the effectiveness of their ideas and skills and those of others (AO3).

Candidates should be able to demonstrate:

- a clear understanding of how plays are constructed and realised
- informed knowledge and understanding of the acting performances and the skills involved
- informed knowledge and understanding of the technical and design elements and the skills involved
- informed knowledge and understanding of the social, historical and cultural context of the live theatre production
- the ability to analyse and evaluate the effectiveness of the skills presented
- the ability to analyse and evaluate the effectiveness of the production as a whole.



## Using *Streetcar* for script realisation

Being able to realise a playscript in performance is an essential part of GCSE and A level syllabuses in drama. This involves students in:

- understanding how plays, in their script form, are different from other forms of literature
- being able to interpret scripts from different perspectives and for different purposes
- learning how to notate their own ideas using the conventions of dramatic writing.

The practical ideas that follow should prove useful in introducing and developing the essential skills for studying scripts.

### Scripts through Scripting

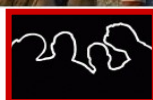
**Mini Plays** - In pairs, students try a number of ways of acting out a mini script. No dialogue to be added but they should explore the variations achieved with changes of **tone, volume, use of space, body language** and **silence**.

- e.g.
- A** Fancy meeting you here.  
**B** Oh, hello.  
**A** It's been a while hasn't it?  
**B** How are you?  
**A** As well as can be expected I suppose.  
**B** I see.  
**A** Do you mind if I sit down?  
**B** I'd better be going.

- Having experimented with some different approaches the student pair should settle for a context, then rehearse it again trying to find ways of **making it clear to an audience who and where they are**. Whole group/teacher evaluation.
- Next, write own mini play, explain nothing but pass it on to another pair for their own interpretation, rehearsal & performance. Evaluate!

***In what ways did performers imagine scenes differently from authors?***

***What does this suggest about the process of realising scripts in performance?***



### Conveying information to audience

A playwright is not able to describe characters to an audience or explain what a character is like the same way that a novelist can. He or she depends on the actors interpreting the characters and the audience understanding them by the clues that are given.

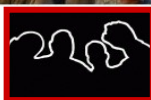
The following guide might prove useful as a quick reference for students:

- **Physical appearance** - some playwrights give intense detail; e.g. George Bernard Shaw (*Androcles* in "Androcles and the Lion"). Others leave it up to the actor or director.
- **How the character moves** - this is a starting point for many actors. Movement is driven by emotion: an agitated person might well move faster than a placid one.
- **The Voice** - what is said is of course important but also *how*, affected by social context, age, occupation, mood... endless variables here.
- **Relationships** - watch how other characters react and relate to each other; how one character *feels* about another is crucial.
- **Hearsay** - you can learn about a character from what others say *about* him/her. (See the example that follows from "*The Glass Menagerie*".)
- **Mannerisms** - the mannerisms and repeated gestures of a character may well indicate a particular character trait or underlying personality.
- **Development** - look for a character's development during a play. Playwright's hints are often subtle but a good indication of truth is how a character reacts under stress.

### Sub text (or the tip of the iceberg)

Focusing on the idea that different characters will have different things on their minds when they speak gives the audience the feeling that what is being spoken aloud is only the tip of the iceberg. It's as though the playwright wants to give us the impression that there's a lot more to the characters - *underneath* what they say, or in the *sub text*.

Read the following extract from *Two Weeks with the Queen* by Mary Morris, and discuss and reflect on how the two characters seem to be thinking about different things. Also, select the moments when the conversation seems to jump from one thing to another..



## A STREETCAR NAMED DESIRE EDUCATION PACK

### Extract:

- Iris** I'll give you sorry, my lad.
- Alistair** Ow ow ow ow ow ow!
- Iris** What else have you two been up to?
- Alistair** It wasn't me it was him!
- Iris** What have I told you about lies?
- Alistair** He said he's torture me if I told.
- Iris** Nothing but trouble since he got here.
- Alistair** I tried to stop him, Mum - honest.



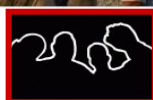
*Two Weeks with the Queen* by Mary Morris

### Playwright's preparing of audience

The following example - also from a Tennessee Williams play - effectively shows how the playwright can prepare an audience *before* a character appears. Also, because of the nature of Amanda's comments, we also learn something about her - and her relationship with her son Tom.

It's an extract from "**The Glass Menagerie**" written by Williams in 1944, and it's the play that launched his name. The play was reworked from one of his short stories "Portrait of a Girl in Glass". It is written from the point of view of narrator Tom Wingfield. It's thought by many to be an autobiographical play about Williams's life, the characters and story mimicking his own more closely than any of his other works. Williams would be Tom, his Mother, Amanda, and his sickly and (supposedly) mentally ill sister Rose would be Laura.

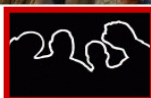
- Read together - discuss and highlight, using the questions that follow it;
- practical responses optional - depending on your usual mode of approach.



## A STREETCAR NAMED DESIRE EDUCATION PACK

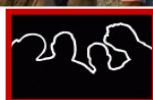
### THE GLASS MENAGERIE extract

- Amanda: ...What is the young man's name?
- Tom: His name is O'Connor.
- Amanda: That of course means fish - tomorrow is Friday! I'll have that salmon loaf - with Durkee's dressing! What does he do? He works at the warehouse?
- Tom: Of course! How else would I-
- Amanda: Tom, he - doesn't drink?
- Tom: Why do you ask me that?
- Amanda: Your father *did*!
- Tom: Don't get started on that!
- Amanda: He *does* drink, then?
- Tom: Not that I know of!
- Amanda: Make sure, be certain! The last thing I want for my daughter's a boy who drinks!
- Tom: Aren't you being a little premature? Mr O'Connor has not yet appeared on the scene!
- Amanda: But will tomorrow. To meet your sister, and what do I know about his character? Nothing! Old maids are better off than wives of drunkards!
- Tom: Oh, my God!
- Amanda: Be still!
- Tom: (*leaning forward to whisper*) Lots of fellows meet girls whom they don't marry!
- Amanda: Oh talk sensibly, Tom - and don't be sarcastic! (*She has got a hairbrush.*)
- Tom: What are you doing?
- Amanda: I'm brushing that cow-lick down? What is this young man's position at the warehouse?
- Tom: (*submitting grimly to the brush and the interrogation*) This young man's position is that of a shipping clerk, Mother.



## A STREETCAR NAMED DESIRE EDUCATION PACK

- Amanda: Sounds to me like a fairly responsible job, the sort of job *you* would be in if you had more *get-up*. What is his salary? Have you any idea?
- Tom: I would judge it to be approximately eighty-five dollars a month.
- Amanda: Well - not princely, but -
- Tom: Twenty more than I make.
- Amanda: Yes, how well I know! But for a family man, eighty-five dollars a month is not much more than you can just get by on...
- Tom: Yes, but Mr O'Connor is not a family man.
- Amanda: He might be, mightn't he? Some time in the future?
- Tom: I see, plans and provisions.
- Amanda: You are the only young man that I know of who ignores the fact that the future becomes the present, the present the past, and the past turns into everlasting regret if you don't plan for it!
- Tom: I will think that over and see what I can make of it.
- Amanda: Don't be supercilious with your mother! Tell me some more about this - what do you call him?
- Tom: James D. O'Connor. The D. is for Delaney.
- Amanda: Irish on both sides! Gracious! And doesn't drink?
- Tom: Shall I call him up and ask him right this minute?
- Amanda: The only way to find out about these things is to make discreet enquiries at the proper moment. When I was a girl in Blue Mountain and it was suspected that a young man drank, the girl whose attentions he had been receiving, if any girl *was*, would sometimes speak to the minister of his church, or rather her father would if her father was living, and sort feel him out on the young man's character. That is the way such things are discreetly handled to keep a young woman from making tragic mistake!
- Tom: Then how did you happen to make a tragic mistake?
- Amanda: That innocent look of your father's had everyone fooled! He *smiled* - the world was *enchanted*! No girl can do worse than put herself at the mercy of a handsome appearance!...



### Reading between the lines...

Although Amanda is grilling Tom about Jim, it's *Amanda's* character that is revealed in this extract. Consider...

1. Why does she want to know about Jim?
2. Why is she so concerned to know whether or not Jim drinks?
3. How does she treat Tom?
4. What do we learn about her from the *way* she speaks (her choice of words and the way she phrases them)?
5. What sort of a man had Amanda married?
6. If you were the actor playing Jim, you should be able to use this scene to find out a little more about *your* character. How, exactly?

*It's interesting too, if time or opportunity allows, to compare the autobiographical elements in this piece with similar echoes in **Streetcar**.*

### From Letters to Monologues

Mixing and matching different *types* of writing can illustrate how drama doesn't just involve dialogue.

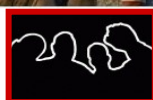
- **Letters, news reports, one-sided telephone conversations, poems, songs** can all be used to communicate characters and situations to an audience.
- **Juxtaposing monologues** can create economical and ironic pieces of drama. (Numerous resources available - you probably have your own. Select and juxtapose ones that fit the bill for this activity.)

### Directing Tension

Students work in 3s on the following script extract, with one acting as **director**.

The tasks are:

- show that each character is experiencing tension
- show that there is tension between the two characters
- build a tension for the audience.



## A STREETCAR NAMED DESIRE EDUCATION PACK

*(An old favourite - substitute one of your own if preferred))*

ALAN: Excuse me - can you tell me where the office is?

KELLY: You a new teacher?

ALAN: That's right.

KELLY: What are you teaching?

ALAN: English, I think.

KELLY: Hasn't Mrs. Harrison told you?

ALAN: Is that the head?

KELLY: You want to see *her*?

ALAN: Yes, that's why I asked...

KELLY: You go down the end of this corridor, then there's these double doors - that's the gym - and then you turn down to your left and that's her office.

ALAN: Thanks. *(He starts to go.)*

KELLY: What's your name?

ALAN: Alan... Mr. Howman. What's yours?

KELLY: You been at a school yet?

ALAN: Excuse me?

KELLY: You been at a school yet?

ALAN: Pardon?

KELLY: You been at a school yet?

ALAN: Have I been teaching at a school you mean?

KELLY: Yeah.

ALAN: Well yes - I've done some teaching practice while I was at college.

KELLY: This is your first job as a teacher though.

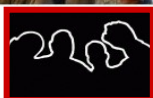
ALAN: Paid job, yes.

KELLY: Oh - hope we get you.

ALAN: You never know your luck.

*(Kelly exits.)*

From **The Fourth Year Are Animals** by Richard Tulloch



## Interpretation of dramatic context

Choose **one** of the following dialogues and apply it, using at least 3 of the following scenarios (play it straight and resist the temptation to make it a spoof). Ideal group size: 3

- **All characters are stereotypical teenagers involved in an emotionally dramatic episode of a soap.**
- **All characters are members of the Mafia, involved in a multi-million dollar criminal deal.**
- **All characters are presenting a children's TV program**
- **All characters are the members of a football club, either players or management.**
- **All characters are the long-term residents of a small town.**

You will need to consider and discuss:

- > **the appropriate body language for communicating character and relationships**
- > **the appropriate use of voice for communicating character and relationships**
- > **what the main theme of the piece would be in each scenario**
- > **what atmosphere would be generated by the dialogue in each scenario.**

### Dialogue 1

A: Hello. Are you the person I was told to see?

B: I don't know. Who were you told to see?

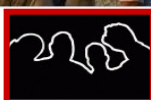
A: I was told to see the person who could help me with something important.

B: That's not me. I never have anything to do with things that are important. You need to talk to my friend here.

C: That's right. I deal with all the important things around here. What's your problem?

A: It's this. I can never tell what is important and what's not.

C: Well, I can't help you unless it's important. If it's not important, you'll have to ask my friend here.



## Dialogue 2

- A** I did what you asked. Now what?  
**B** Now you have to write out a report.  
**A** But I thought it was a secret.  
**C** It is. And we want a secret report.  
**B** Make sure you don't leave anything out.  
**A** No. I won't do it. Once I've written something down it won't be secret any more.  
**C** Are you sure you did what we asked you to do?  
**A** Of course I'm sure.  
**B** Then it isn't secret, is it? We know what you did.  
**A** You tricked me!  
**C** No, you tricked yourself.

BRAINSTORM, PLAN, REHEARSE, PERFORM, EVALUATE!

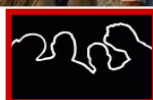
## A text exercise

The written text of a play - similarly - may be interpreted in different ways. A **designer** for instance would be interested in different aspects of a text from an **actor**, and a **director** would also tend to take a much wider view - with concern for stage/space constraints, lighting states, incidental music and a hundred other aspects of performance. Helping students to realise that scripts are not sacred should make plays less intimidating...

- **Give pairs or small groups envelopes containing several lines of dialogue with the task of recreating a scene.**

They should concentrate less on accurate and logical reconstruction and more on:

- what they interpret as the important overall **atmosphere** and **tone** of the piece
- **where** and **when** they thought the scene was set
- what they **felt** about the characters.



## Drama Workshops

### Workshop : Identity 1

Although **Blanche** and **Stella** appear to know each other quite well from their time growing up together at Belle Reve, many surprising aspects and secrets of their individual identities are only revealed under pressure.

What aspects of our identity do we disguise in front of our friends?

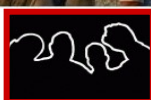
- Create two freeze frames, **from your own experience**, about a young person leading **two different** lives showing the contrast between home and friendship group.
- Bring the freeze frames to life with **one line spoken by each character**.
- Use movement to slowly **blend** from one freeze into the other.
- Observe how **symbolic gestures** emerge from the movement sequence.



### Workshop : Identity 2



- Using **Whole Group Improvisation**, create an extra scene *after* the final scene - after **Blanche** has been taken away to an institution, where the other characters reflect on events, showing the depth of each character's feelings now that she has gone.
- Using **non-naturalistic techniques**: freeze the scene at appropriate moments and **thought track** each individual character.



## Workshop : Identity 3 - Loyalty and dependence

- Get students to find examples of where **Stella** defends **Stanley's** less attractive actions and words (various ways of approaching this - again, use methods you and your students find familiar), then initiate small and whole group discussion as to why and how this can happen all too easily in men/women relationships.

There are a host of Teachers' Resources for Citizenship and PSHE on the internet that offer detailed approaches to this tricky but potentially highly rewarding area of study.

A useful starting trigger might be Patricia Johnstone's poem below:

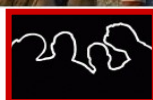
### Hiding The Bruises

He wasn't himself.  
He was drunk.  
I fell.  
It was an accident.  
I wound him up.  
He's not like this when he's sober.  
He's a sweet man who wouldn't hurt a fly  
Or knowingly harm a soul.  
I know him!  
I know what he's really like.  
He's not like this most of the time.  
It's partly my fault because  
I do things that get on his nerves and drive him mad.  
He's never hurt the children.  
It's probably my doing.  
Why are you looking at me like that?  
Stop looking at me like that.

Patricia Johnstone

Other activities that support this context might include:

- **Conscience alley** **Imaging relationships** **Role on wall** **Mapping**



## More drama & writing activities

### Between the scenes: paired acting exercise

Read the end of Act One and the opening of Act Two.



- In mixed pairs, create a **new scene** where **Mitch** and **Blanche** try to have a good night out together - perhaps at a fairground - but which clearly is a struggle for both of them, for reasons of their own, and which builds a clear tension between the two of them. [Brainstorm how *different* they are from each other, and how that might start to show in their dialogue.]
- Try using *as few words as possible* to maximum effect.

### Other scenes to explore: Group impro. exercise

What other events are talked about in the play but not actually seen?

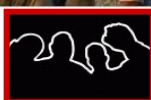


- In groups choose a different episode and re-create it as it described in the dialogue from the original play. [Look at **Blanche's** recurring nightmare for starters!]

### Back story: writing exercise

*Tennessee Williams has allegedly based some of the characters in Streetcar on real people he met - and it's to be supposed that he knows the 'back story' of those characters very well.*

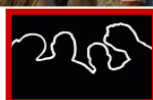
- Choose **Stanley** or **Stella** and choose a moment from the play. Imagine this is a **frozen moment** where they are looking back over their life. **Write a monologue** about their thoughts at this point.
- You might well **perform your monologue** for your group or class later.
- ♦ Now choose someone you know. Is it possible to do the same exercise? You can start to invent things to help the story of the monologue. [When writing about memory include the colours, smells and sounds of the moment, this will help you to bring your writing to life.]



## A STREETCAR NAMED DESIRE EDUCATION PACK

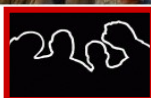
### Drama 'quickies' - pre & post theatre visit

- Exploring some characters (**Stella, Blanche, Stanley, Mitch**) using **freezes, on-the-spot mimes, tableaux** and **improvisation**;
- using **objects as props** (a bus ticket, a letter, a pack of cards) as well as selected words and phrases from the play to create improvisations which can then be discussed/reviewed with the group;
- asking students to create pieces of theatre in small groups based on a particular dilemma arising from the theme of '**Romance v Realism**';
- using **group characters**: divide the class into two smaller groups and ask them to sit in circles to represent two characters. Ask one member of each group to sit at the front or in the middle of the drama space. Give the characters a dilemma (think of the particular situation and problem). Group characters (in the circles) have to decide on any action the character takes or any dialogue they speak;
- ask students to perform a **piece of text** or **improvisation** to the group on a similar topic; remember, some students may never have seen live theatre before - talk about the role of the **audience**;
- students to keep **diaries as fictional characters** who appear in the drama;
- creating a display using material the students have researched, e.g. **mask theatre** or **puppet-making**;
- creating a **storyboard** of some of the main events in the play;
- using a particular drama activity (**conscience alley, flashback, puppet-making, storytelling, questioning & shadowing, forum theatre, paired improvisation**) rather than the script itself to prepare students for engaging with the play;
- students given the chance to ask the actors or the characters questions. Prepare for this using **hot-seating**. Students take it in turns to sit in the hot seat in the role of a particular character - say **Mitch** - while others ask questions, or ask students to spend a minute interviewing each other in pairs on a particular issue [prepare **specific questions** for the actors/characters immediately beforehand];
- whole group prediction/speculation of what could happen at the end of the play;
- written evaluation on unit of work on *Streetcar* [not really a 'quickie'!].



## Other related activities

- Asking students to write a newspaper-style **review** of the play;
- **writing letters** to **FOURBLOKES** theatre company about the experience;
- **illustrating** scenes from the performance or workshop activities, and giving **captions** to the illustrations or photographs of the event;
- **re-setting the lines in a new context:** students are given an extract from one scene in *Streetcar* to study for **genre style**, then they choose four or five consecutive lines from the extract and hide them in a new scene of their own devising;
- using a particular short video clip from the Brando/Leigh film version - use as **trigger** for **spin-off improvisation**;
- discussion-based evaluation using specific criteria, such as **design, sound-track, characterisation, voice, movement** and **colour**;
- **working off text:** extend the story of the performance — what happened next? What happened just before?;
- **working on text:** recreate one of the scenes or scene extract from the play;
- creating **puppets** or **junk sculptures** based on aspects of the performance;
- **the Family Album:** if **Blanche** had kept a series of photographs of key moments in hers and **Stella's** lives, what would those photos show?  
[students make **still images** of those moments - from or beyond the play];
- **Writing in role/creative extension:** students could be asked to produce creative writing from the perspective of say, **Eunice**, or to relate the events of *Streetcar* in a different style of format - newspaper or TV documentary for example. **The Simpsons** have already done this!



## Reflecting and Reviewing

*Reviewing live performance is an important element of Drama and Theatre Studies. The purpose of this section is to provide approaches intended to help students reflect on their visit to the theatre.*

**AQA spec. reminder:** "Candidates should be able to demonstrate their understanding of performance or design or technical skills as well as their knowledge and understanding of the chosen live production from a performance perspective (AO1), and they should be able to analyse and evaluate the effectiveness of their ideas and skills and those of others (AO3)."

There is no set format to organising thoughts and opinions and the following prompts are only a guide for students to help structure their note-making.

---

### Writing a review - a student's prompt:

Whilst watching **Streetcar** you will be forming opinions and making judgments about the play and the production. The critic's job is to pass comment on the quality of the show informing others about its good and bad points in the process.

When writing a review of a play, there is a lot to think about. The efforts of the actors, director, set designer and lighting designer are all presented for your judgment. You may not want to comment on every aspect of the play, but the following outline will help you to structure your review.

#### **1: Introduction**

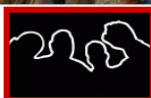
Title: "**A Streetcar Named Desire**" by **Tennessee Williams**

Director: Barry Taylor

Company: **FOURBLOKES THEATRE**

Where and when you saw the play.

How you felt about seeing the play before it started.



# A STREETCAR NAMED DESIRE EDUCATION PACK

## 2: The play

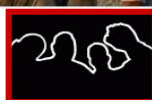
- ◆ Give a brief outline of the story and the main characters.
- ◆ Did you find the story convincing?
- ◆ Which parts worked best for you?
- ◆ Were there any moments that stirred your emotions?
- ◆ Did it hold the audience's interest? How did they react to the play?
- ◆ What were the main themes of the play?
- ◆ How did you feel about the characters?
- ◆ Which one did you respond to most and why?
- ◆ Did you reflect on your life, or the lives of people you know, or society as a whole as a result of seeing the play?
- ◆ How does the play compare or relate to others that you have seen?

## 3: The acting

- ◆ How did you rate the actors? Comment on **voice**, **gesture** and **movement**. What things did they do to **distinguish** between the characters they played?

## 4: Conclusion

- ◆ Bring in anything that you thought remarkably good or bad about the production. On balance was it successful? Did it keep your interest and involve you?



**EVALUATION FORM**

**We really do want to make our packs relevant and helpful, so we need your help... please take a few moments to complete this form.**

**Name:** .....

**School/College/University:** .....

**Tel No/Email:** .....

**Date you attended production:** .....

**Venue:** .....

**Comment on ticket price:** .....

**Brief comment on the production:** .....

.....

.....

**Have you used this pack?:** .....

**If yes, has it been useful?:** .....

**What did you particularly like/dislike about the pack?:** .....

.....

.....

**Any other comments:** .....

.....

.....

**Is there a play that you would like to see FOURBLOKES present?:** .....

.....

**Please return completed form to:  
'FOURBLOKES', 42, Astcote Close, Heanor, Derbyshire DE75 7TH  
Or email us at [info@fourblokes.com](mailto:info@fourblokes.com)**

**THANKS!**

