

Worksheet 9 – Scene Eight

Review: Lecture 8

In the previous lecture of the unit, Prof. McRae discusses how in Scene Seven Stanley reveals to Stella information he has found out about Blanche's past.

- ✓ What is the reason Blanche had to leave her job as an English teacher in Laurel?

Recall: Lecture 9

Complete this task after watching the video lecture to check how much you remember. You can also take the "Module Quiz" online.

1. Divide a piece of A4 paper into six squares. In each square write one of the following headings:
a) Stella c) Stanley e) American Civil War
b) Blanche d) New Orleans f) Tennessee Williams
Time yourself, giving yourself two minutes per box. Write down everything you can remember about that character or topic.
2. After you have finished, look back at what you have written. Decide:
a) Were there any topics you had less information for?
b) What might you need to rewatch, reread or revise?

Analysis

3. Rewatch the lecture from 5:57 to the end, where McRae discusses the final stage directions of the scene.
a) In your copy of the script, annotate the lines in **bold** using McRae's notes from the lecture.

*He is with her now, **supporting her with his arm**, murmuring indistinguishably as they go outside. **The "Varsouviana" is heard, its music rising with sinister rapidity** as the bathroom door opens slightly. BLANCHE comes out twisting a washcloth. She begins to whisper the words as the light fades slowly.*

BLANCHE: ***El pan de mais, el pan de mais,
El pan de mais sin sal.
El pan de mais, el pan de mais,
El pan de mais sin sal.***

- b) Write an **analytical paragraph** describing the dramatic effect of these stage directions at the close of Scene Eight.

Challenge: Think carefully about the **critical verbs** you use when describing Williams's language and staging choices. What are the different implications of these verbs?

Williams suggests...

Williams highlights...

Williams reveals...

Williams alludes to...

Williams provokes...

Williams critiques...

Williams posits...

Evaluation

4. While discussing Scene Eight, Prof. McRae states that ‘every time Stanley takes his shirt off, he’s doing something with his masculinity’ [4:24].
- a) Read the critical interpretation below of masculinity in *A Streetcar Named Desire*.

Critical interpretation: Carla J. McDonough, *Staging Masculinity: Male Identity in Contemporary American Drama* (1997), p. 25

While most of Williams’s homosexual men are not allowed on stage but are represented – spoken for – by other characters, usually women, the heterosexual men are all too dominant. The aggressive sexuality of Stanley Kowalski, however, does not necessarily indicate he possesses any more security concerning his identity and social position than do the other male characters. If male homosexuality must be protected or defended by being masked in shame and sheltered off-stage, by being figured by tragic characters who are “too good for this world” (as Blanche says of her young husband), male heterosexuality evidently must be aggressively assertive of stage space, defending (oftentimes violently) its preeminent position in order to maintain that position. This defensive posture suggests an imperiled masculinity, one that needs to be defended but that is, nonetheless, subject to its audience, which must accept this posture in order for the posture to survive. In this regard, Stanley’s masculinity is simply another “masquerade” not far removed from that of the Southern belle enacted by Blanche.

- b) In your own words, explain what you think McDonough means by Stanley’s masculinity being a ‘masquerade’.
- c) To what extent do you agree with McDonough’s argument regarding the presentation of masculinity in the play?

Glossary

- **Assertive** – (adj.) having or showing a confident and forceful personality.
e.g. To succeed as a headteacher you must be assertive.
- **Masquerade** – (n.) a false show or pretence; the wearing of a disguise.
e.g. He seemed so pleasant, but it was all just a masquerade.
- **Posture** – (n.) the position someone holds their body in; an approach or attitude; a way of behaving intended to convey a false impression, such as a pose.
e.g. Stop posturing around looking in the mirror and get on with some work!