

Worksheet 6 – Scene Five

Review: Lecture 5

In the last lecture, Prof. McRae explored the events in Scene Four, the morning after the poker night.

- ✓ What was the significance of the street noise at the start of the scene being described as a 'choral chant'?

Recall: Lecture 6

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

1. Which two emotions did the ancient Greek philosopher Aristotle attribute to tragedy?
a) sadness and fear c) excitement and fear
b) joy and sadness d) pity and fear

2. What is Blanche's star sign?
a) Virgo c) Leo
b) Aries d) Taurus

Bonus point: Why is this ironic?

3. What is the name of the opera Blanche references at the end of Scene Five?
a) *La Traviata* c) *Carmen*
b) *Der Ring des Nibelungen* d) *Der Rosenkavalier*

Bonus point: What is the connection between this opera and *A Streetcar Named Desire*?

Analysis

4. Prof. McRae discusses how, at this point in the play Blanche is becoming increasingly delusional. Let's zoom in on some key quotations to explore this further:
 - a) Reread the two extracts below from Scene One and Scene Five.
 - b) From these extracts highlight three examples of how Williams foreshadows Blanche's tragic fall through his use of **imagery** relating to:
 - insects
 - light
 - clothing

Scene One

Blanche comes around the corner, carrying a valise. She looks at a slip of paper, then at the building, then again at the slip and again at the building. Her expression is one of shocked disbelief. Her appearance is incongruous to this setting. She is daintily dressed in a white suit with a fluffy bodice, necklace and earrings of pearl, white gloves and hat, looking as if she were arriving at a summer tea or cocktail party in the garden district. She is about five years older than Stella. Her delicate beauty must avoid a strong light. There is something about her uncertain manner, as well as her white clothes, that suggests a moth.

Scene Five

BLANCHE: I never was hard or self-sufficient enough. When people are soft – soft people have got to court the favour of hard ones, Stella. Have got to be seductive – put on soft colors, the colours of butterfly wings, and glow – make a little – temporary magic just in order to pay for – one night’s shelter! [...] It isn't enough to be soft. You've got to be soft *and attractive*. And I – I'm fading now!

5. Using your ideas from Question 4, answer the question below in an analytical paragraph.

How does Williams foreshadow Blanche’s tragic fall in *A Streetcar Named Desire*?

Optional sentence starters:

Williams foreshadows Blanche’s fall through his recurrent use of imagery relating to...

When Blanche is introduced the audience in Scene One, for example,...

This connects to later in the play, in Scene Five, where...

Williams uses this imagery to symbolise...

Evaluation

6. In Scene Five, Blanche meets an unnamed stranger, known only to the audience by the epithet ‘Young Man’. Strangers play an important role in *A Streetcar Named Desire*, and Prof. McRae suggests that the Young Man symbolizes the ‘endless possibilities of strangers’.
- Make a list of all of the “strangers” that Blanche meets or mentions throughout the play.
 - What possibilities does Blanche see in these strangers? Do any of these possibilities become true?
7. Sociologist Zygmunt Baumann has argued that the concept of strangers became even more important in modern cities in the twentieth century, as increasing numbers of people lived in close proximity without ever really connecting:

‘Strangers are not a modern invention – but strangers who remain strangers for a long time to come, even in perpetuity, are. [...] Cities are spaces where strangers stay and move in close proximity to each other.’

Zygmunt Baumann, *Liquid Love: On the Frailty of Human Bonds* (2003).

- What do you think Baumann is suggesting about the nature of living in a modern city?
- How would this contrast to living in a small community, such as the rural plantation at Belle Reve?
- How do you think Baumann’s theory might connect to how Williams presents Blanche’s experience in New Orleans?

Glossary

- Astrology** – (n.) the study of the movements and relative positions of planets, stars and moons, specifically interpreted as having an influence on human affairs and the natural world.
e.g. I am interested in astrology, such as the signs of the Zodiac.
- Parlance** – (n.) a particular way of speaking.
e.g. That’s now a term that’s no longer in common parlance.

- **Sociologist** – (n.) someone who studies the development, structure, and functioning of human society.
e.g. Sociologists have been exploring the impact of self-isolation on human relationships.