



Sydney Theatre Company and UBS Investment Bank present



A Streetcar Named Desire

by Tennessee Williams

Directed by Liv Ullmann

Teacher's Resource Kit

Written and compiled by Jeffrey Dawson

Acknowledgements

Sydney Theatre Company would like to thank the following for their advice for these Teachers' Notes:
Tess Schofield & Alan John.

Copyright

Copyright protects this Teacher's Resource Kit. Except for purposes permitted by the Copyright Act, reproduction by whatever means is prohibited. However, limited photocopying for classroom use only is permitted by educational institutions.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | |
|---|----|
| Sydney Theatre Company..... | 3 |
| STC Ed | 3 |
| IMPORTANT INFORMATION | 4 |
| RUNNING ORDER..... | 4 |
| Cast and Creatives | 5 |
| Curriculum Links | 5 |
| About the Play | 6 |
| About the Playwright..... | 7 |
| About the Production | 8 |
| Pre-Performance Questions and Activities | 9 |
| Questions/Activities for students who haven't read the play | 9 |
| Questions/Activities for students who have read the play..... | 11 |
| APPENDIX A | 12 |
| Edward Hopper's Paintings | 12 |

Sydney Theatre Company

Sydney Theatre Company, as the premier theatre company in Australia, has been a major force in Australian drama since its establishment in 1978. It was created by the New South Wales Government, following the demise of the Old Tote Theatre Company. The company presents an annual twelve-play program at its home base The Wharf, on Sydney's harbour at Walsh Bay, the nearby Sydney Theatre, which STC also manages, and as the resident theatre company of the Sydney Opera House. Current Artistic Directors, Cate Blanchett and Andrew Upton joined the Company at the beginning of 2008.

STC actively fosters relationships and collaborations with international artists and companies. Renowned directors Michael Blakemore, Max Stafford-Clark, Howard Davies, Declan Donnellan and Philip Seymour Hoffman have worked with STC in recent years and in 2009 Liv Ullman and Steven Soderbergh will direct for the Company. STC has presented productions by Complicite, Cheek by Jowl, Out-of-Joint and the National Theatre of Great Britain. In 2001 STC performed at the Brooklyn Academy of Music in New York with its production of *The White Devil*, returned in 2006 with its production of *Hedda Gabler* and will return again in 2009 with its production of *A Streetcar Named Desire* which will also tour to Washington.

STC has launched and fostered the theatre careers of many of Australia's internationally renowned artists including Mel Gibson, Judy Davis, Hugo Weaving, Miranda Otto, Geoffrey Rush, Toni Collette, Rose Byrne and Cate Blanchett.

In 2006 STC launched its first acting ensemble, The Actors Company, which, over three years, has performed an extraordinary range of repertoire including award-winning productions of *Mother Courage & Her Children*, *The Season at Sarsaparilla*, *The Lost Echo*, *Gallipoli* and *The Wars of the Roses*. In 2009 STC introduced its new ensemble of theatre-makers The Residents who will perform right across the full range of the Company's activities including Main Stage, Next Stage and STC Ed productions.

To access detailed information on Sydney Theatre Company, its history and productions please contact our Archivist Judith Seeff at jseeff@sydneytheatre.com.au

STC Ed

Since 1987 Sydney Theatre Company has presented productions and workshops for school audiences. Sydney Theatre Company is committed to education by programming original **productions** and **workshops** that enthuse and engage the next generation of theatre-goers. Within the STC Ed programme we produce a season of plays as well as collaborate with leading theatre-for-young-people companies across Australia.

Often a young person's first experience of theatre is facilitated by teachers. STC ensures access to all of its Main Stage productions through the **Schools Day** programme as well as producing and touring theatre specifically crafted to resonate with young people.

It's vital that students engage with work of the highest quality. Art can expand your view of the world and encourage innovative, engaged thinking and compassion. Sydney Theatre Company has an extensive on-line resource for teachers and students. Visit www.sydneytheatre.com.au/education.

We encourage teachers to subscribe to regular e-news to keep informed as well as access **heavily discounted** tickets and special offers.

For further information on STC Ed, please contact the Education Coordinator Toni Murphy at education@sydneytheatre.com.au

A Streetcar Named Desire Schoolsday

IMPORTANT INFORMATION

Date: Wed 16 Sept
Venue: Sydney Theatre, 22 Hickson Rd
Suitability: Years 10-12

RUNNING ORDER

10.00 am Collect tickets from Sydney Theatre box office – 22 Hickson Rd, Walsh Bay

10.15am Assemble in foyer to be seated for pre-show discussion

10.30am Pre-show discussion in the theatre

11.15am Break for Lunch (we recommend that students bring their lunch)

11.50am Assemble in foyer to be seated for performance

12.15pm Performance of A Streetcar Named Desire (including interval)

3.30pm Conclusion of performance. Students remain seated for **post-show Q&A** (approx 15 mins)

We respectfully ask that you discuss theatre etiquette with your students prior to coming to the performance.

Running Late?

Please contact Front of House on 9250 1904.

Booking Queries

Please contact the STC Ed Booking line on 02 9250 1778 or
education@sydneytheatre.com.au

General Education Queries

Please contact Toni Murphy, Education Coordinator on 02 9250 1795 or
education@sydneytheatre.com.au

Cast and Creatives

Cast

| | |
|--------------------------|--------------------|
| Blanche Dubois: | Cate Blanchett |
| Stanley Kowalski: | Joel Edgerton |
| Stella Kowalski: | Robin McLeavy |
| Mitch (Harold Mitchell): | Tim Richards |
| Eunice Hubbel: | Mandy McElhinney |
| Steve Hubbel: | Michael Denkha |
| Pablo Gonzales: | Jason Klarwein |
| Negro Woman: | Sara Zwangobani |
| A Strange Man (Doctor): | Russell Kiefel |
| A Strange Woman (Nurse): | Elaine Hudson |
| A Young Collector: | Morgan David Jones |
| A Mexican Woman: | Gertraud Ingeborg |
| Pianist: | Alan John |

Creatives

| | |
|----------------------------|-------------------|
| Director: | Liv Ullmann |
| Assistant to the Director: | Einar Bjorge |
| Set Designer: | Ralph Myers |
| Costume Designer: | Tess Schofield |
| Lighting Designer: | Nick Schlieper |
| Sound Designer: | Paul Charlier |
| Composer: | Alan John |
| Voice Consultant: | Charmian Gradwell |

Curriculum Links

Suitable for Years 10-12.

This is the last year this text is prescribed for the Year 12 Drama: American Theatre unit. However, it is an invaluable text for integrated study in the **Year 12 English Area of Study: Belonging**, especially in its representation of sibling relations (compared with the cousins Rosalind and Celia in the set text, Shakespeare's *As You Like It*.)

About the Play

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 ...

A Streetcar Named Desire describes the cultural and social differences and the arising problems between two different “worlds”. On the one hand is the former “world” of Blanche DuBois, a woman of the Old South and on the other hand is the “world” of Stella and Stanley Kowalski, who belong to the working class and live in the downtown immigrant neighborhood of New Orleans. Stella informs Blanche in Scene One that Stanley is Polish, to which Blanche comments, “Oh yes. They’re something like Irish, aren’t they? ... Only not so – highbrow?” Stella calls her husband “a different species.”

The play is set right after World War II, in the rather poor but charming neighborhood of the French Quarter in New Orleans; in the street Elysian Fields. In this colorful and multicultural street Blanche DuBois; a nervous and hysterical woman from Laurel, Mississippi, arrives at the apartment of her sister, Stella Kowalski. The sisters derive from an old aristocratic plantation called Belle Rêve. Stella left the family’s property to live with her husband Stanley in New Orleans. Stanley is a proud American with Polish roots and belongs to the lower working class. He is brute, very masculine, brutal but smart. Although, Blanche seems to have lost a closer contact with Stella, she intends to stay in the Elysian Fields for an unspecified but long period of time. Blanche does not only carry all her belongings with her, but also sad news for Stella: Belle Rêve, the old family-owned plantation has been lost. All members of the family died during the last years and now Stella is the only person left for Blanche. But that is not the only reason for Blanche to leave Laurel; she also mentions that she has lost her teaching position because of her several nervous breakdowns. Therefore, Blanche plans to live with Stella and Stanley in the Elysian Fields. This plan is the beginning of a struggle for Stella’s favour between Stanley and Blanche. It turns out into a fight about lies and desire.

About the Playwright

Tennessee Williams

Thomas Lanier (“Tennessee”) Williams was born on the 26th of March in 1911 in Columbus, Mississippi and died in New York in 1983. He was one of the most successful American playwrights of the 20th century. Tennessee Williams was one of three children of Cornelius Williams, a travelling shoe salesman and Edwina Williams, a woman with educational background from the South.

Williams had a very close relationship to his sister, Rose Williams. She was an elegant, slim beauty who struggled with nervous attacks and was diagnosed with schizophrenia. Mentally ill and emotionally disturbed, she spent most of her life in mental hospitals. Her life and her character influenced Williams in his writing. Some characters in his plays are often said to be representations of his family members. One example is the character of Laura Wingfield in *The Glass Menagerie*, who is understood to be influenced by Rose. Also the character of Blanche DuBois in *A Streetcar Named Desire* is supposed to be based on Rose. [Williams explains Blanche’s behaviour thus at the start of Scene Six in a stage direction: *“The utter exhaustion which only a neurasthenic personality can know is evident in Blanche’s voice and manner.”*

About the Production

Quotes from: **A Streetcar Named Desire Subscriber Briefing Wharf 1 – 24 August 2009**

A Streetcar Named Desire is a poem repressed by the machine age of modern life. It starts out as a love triangle, turns into a love square and then into a straight line!
Andrew Upton, Artistic Director

There are pitfalls of stereotyping to be avoided. The film is haunted by clichés so we have tried to get back to truthful connections, pushed by Liv. We have discovered the brutal and emotional.
Cate Blanchett, Blanche

Tennessee Williams himself describes Blanche as moth-like in the way she is attracted to the light, then burnt out.
Liv Ullmann, Director

I have had to differentiate Stanley and put Brando out of mind. There are levels of brutality to approach; he's unlikable in some ways. I have looked at ways to look at his mind, his engine, and what lies behind this – his low stock. The risk of him losing his Stella.
Joel Edgerton, Stanley

Stella is stuck between huge, forthright personalities. She is operating out of fear and stubbornness. She is restricted by her choice and bound by circumstance.
Robin McLeavy, Stella

There is confused and troubled desire in the play, desire leading to death.
Cate Blanchett, Blanche

Streetcar is a claustrophobic play. Three people stuck in a room that can't house them with humanity. It is a big empty stage. The production uses objects of the period such as a black telephone.
Ralph Myers, Designer

There is a musicality to the Southern accent, how it sings and moves, the length of its vowels. The play is set in Louisiana, Stella DuBois is a blow-in from Mississippi, and Stanley is from up north. There are Hispanic voices which add to a meld of dialect.
Charmian Gradwell, Voice and Text Coach

Pre-Performance Questions and Activities

Questions/Activities for students who haven't read the play

1. Research – the timeline of the play; i.e. the temporal setting of the play – post-World War II 1945-1949

2. Research:

Look at films with similar themes and settings to *Streetcar* such as

The Rose Tattoo

The Fugitive Kind

Butterfield 8

The Long, Hot Summer (1958)

Cat on a Hot Tin Roof – “What is the victory of a cat on a hot tin roof?--I wish I knew. . . . Just staying on it, I guess, as long as she can.” MAGGIE

Suddenly, Last Summer

Sweet Bird of Youth

Also look at *The Reaping* (starring Hilary Swank) and *O Brother Where Art Thou* (directed by Coen Brothers) with their Southern settings.

Or for the ultimate postmodern view: view scenes from *The Simpsons – season 4, episode 2: A Streetcar Named Marge* as an inroad into William's play through parody.

Songs from the episode can be found on youtube -

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=50IWwFn73Is>

More info on the episode can be found on wikipedia –

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/A_Streetcar_Named_Marge

3. Brainstorm what you already know about New Orleans, starting with **Hurricane Katrina** , then read the following quotes from Williams about New Orleans as he sees it.

To familiarise yourself with **the milieu of New Orleans** (Williams' physical and psychological surroundings), take the lead from Blanche: When she first arrives at the Kowalskis' apartment in New Orleans, she explains: *They told me to take a street-car named Desire, and transfer to one called Cemeteries, and ride six blocks and get off at Elysian Fields!*. "Desire" is the name of the streetcar [tram] route that takes Blanche to her sister's apartment. Elysian Fields is the name of the street on which the Kowalskis live, but it is also the name for the land of the dead in Greek mythology. Knowing that, the allegory becomes fairly obvious. Blanche's desire has gotten her on a route (the streetcar) that will lead to her death (Elysian Fields).

Williams tells us in his stage directions that Elysian Fields is poor but unlike corresponding sections in other American cities, it has a raffish charm.”

Williams told us in his introductory stage directions in 1949, “New Orleans is a cosmopolitan city where there is a relatively warm and easy intermingling of races in the old part of town.”

Williams also informs us in his *Memoirs*, “I know of no city where it is better to have a skylight than New Orleans. You know, New Orleans is slightly below sea level and maybe that’s why the clouds and the sky seem so close. In New Orleans the clouds always seem just overhead. I suppose they are just vapour off the Mississippi more than genuine clouds. (London: W.H. Allen, 1972).

4. Research the paintings of American artist Edward Hopper who is a visual reference for the setting of this production. His paintings usually isolate an individual in a monumental setting with a solo figure seen through a curtained window. (Use Appendix A for inspiration)

Compare and contrast this scope with this interpretation of Ralph Myers’ set by *SMH* critic Jason Blake: “Ralph Myers's set design blends contemporary monumental with period realism, compressing the Kowalskis' apartment under a looming exterior wall whose only feature is the window of upstairs neighbours, the Hubells, reached by means of a dangerously steep fire escape ladder. No ornamental ironwork or poetically distressed New Orleans flourishes here. It's grimy, cheap and there's nowhere to hide, a space ruthlessly calculated to keep a southern belle on edge.”

Questions/Activities for students who have read the play

1. Identify and discuss some of the techniques that Tennessee Williams uses to shape meaning in his play: e.g. emotive and poetic language, allusions, juxtaposition of themes and scenes, such as pretense versus authenticity. Also look at the effect of William's employment of metaphors and animal imagery.
2. Some critics believe that ***A Streetcar Named Desire*** is the quintessential American play. How does it live up to and/or let down this tag? Even the setting of Elysian Fields Blanche feels, "only Poe! Only Mr. Edgar Allan Poe! Could do it justice! Out there I suppose is the ghoulish-woodland of Weir!"
3. Blanche says jokingly that she's "compiling a notebook of quaint little words and phrases I've picked up here." Make a list of such quaint words, reproachments and expressions that Blanche either uses or has picked up in the play, such as the following from Scene V: "Don't you just love those long rainy afternoons in New Orleans when an hour isn't just an hour – but a little bit of Eternity dropped in your hands – and who knows what to do with it?"
4. Research the paintings of American artist Edward Hopper who is a visual reference for the setting of this production. His paintings usually isolate an individual in a monumental setting with a solo figure seen through a curtained window. (Use Appendix A for inspiration)

Compare and contrast this scope with this interpretation of Ralph Myers' set by *SMH* critic Jason Blake: "Ralph Myers's set design blends contemporary monumental with period realism, compressing the Kowalskis' apartment under a looming exterior wall whose only feature is the window of upstairs neighbours, the Hubells, reached by means of a dangerously steep fire escape ladder. No ornamental ironwork or poetically distressed New Orleans flourishes here. It's grimy, cheap and there's nowhere to hide, a space ruthlessly calculated to keep a southern belle on edge."

APPENDIX A

Edward Hopper's Paintings

Edward Hopper's Paintings are evocative American landscape and seascape paintings which have become icons of American culture. Here you will find a selection of his images which all reflect his fascination with light and colour and love of architecture – and for the purpose of the play, reflect the claustrophobic interior of the characters' world. Hopper is generally thought of as America's foremost Realist painter.

This reference becomes more impressive when we learn from Williams himself (Reference: Tennessee Williams, "Where Plays Come From" in George Plimpton (ed.), *Playwrights At Work – The Paris Review*, The Modern Library, New York 2000.)

p.94: "A play just seems to materialize, like an apparition it gets clearer and clearer. It's very vague at first, as in the case of *Streetcar*.... I simply had the vision of a woman in her late youth. She was sitting in a chair all alone by a window with the moonlight streaming in on her desolate face, and she'd been stood up by the man she planned to marry.... From that vision *Streetcar* evolved. I called it at the time, "Blanche's Chair in the Moon," which is a very bad title. But it was from that image, you know, of a woman sitting by a window that *Streetcar* came to me."



Hotel Room



New York Movie



Edward Hopper The Museum of Modern Art, New York

Summertime

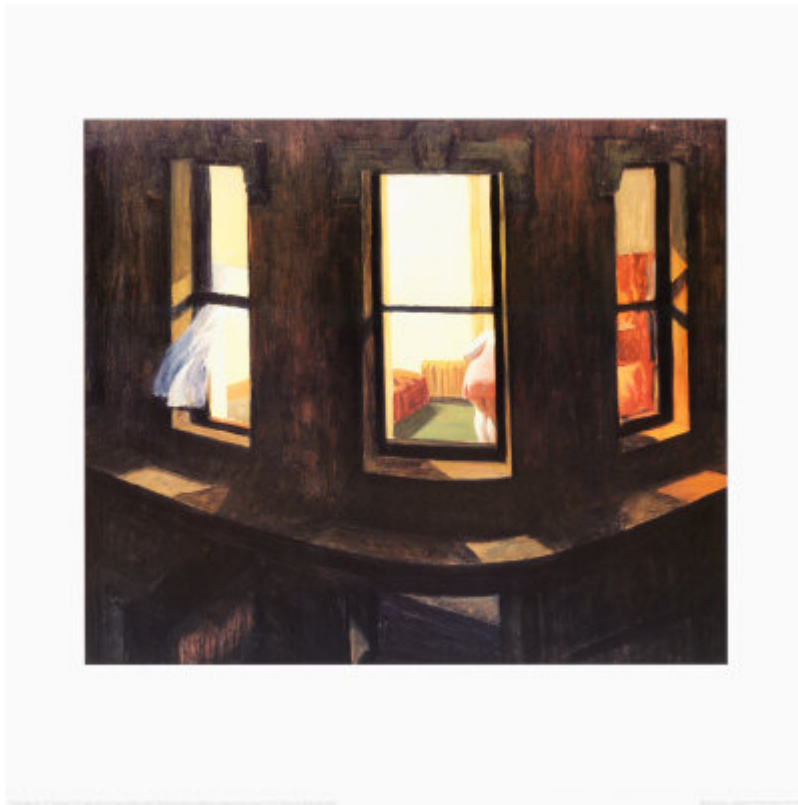


American Painting at the Delaware Art Museum



Could this be what Belle Reve was like? (Edward Hopper's *House by the Rail Road*)

The Night Window



Summer Evening



EDWARD HOPPER · SUMMER EVENING
COLDWATER • COLLECTION



Sydney Theatre Company and UBS Investment Bank present



A Streetcar Named Desire

by Tennessee Williams

Directed by Liv Ullmann

Teacher's Resource Kit – Design Resources

Written and compiled by Robyn Edwards and Samantha Kosky

Copyright

Copyright protects this Teacher's Resource Kit. Except for purposes permitted by the Copyright Act, reproduction by whatever means is prohibited. However, limited photocopying for classroom use only is permitted by educational institutions.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | |
|--|----|
| Sydney Theatre Company..... | 3 |
| STC Ed | 3 |
| IMPORTANT INFORMATION | 4 |
| RUNNING ORDER..... | 4 |
| Cast and Creatives | 5 |
| Curriculum Links | 5 |
| THEATRICAL FORM AND STYLE AN INTRODUCTION..... | 6 |
| SET | 7 |
| LIGHTING | 9 |
| COSTUME..... | 11 |
| SOUND | 12 |
| INTERNET RESOURCES:..... | 13 |
| APPENDIX A | 14 |

Sydney Theatre Company

Sydney Theatre Company, as the premier theatre company in Australia, has been a major force in Australian drama since its establishment in 1978. It was created by the New South Wales Government, following the demise of the Old Tote Theatre Company. The company presents an annual twelve-play program at its home base The Wharf, on Sydney's harbour at Walsh Bay, the nearby Sydney Theatre, which STC also manages, and as the resident theatre company of the Sydney Opera House. Current Artistic Directors, Cate Blanchett and Andrew Upton joined the Company at the beginning of 2008.

STC actively fosters relationships and collaborations with international artists and companies. Renowned directors Michael Blakemore, Max Stafford-Clark, Howard Davies, Declan Donnellan and Philip Seymour Hoffman have worked with STC in recent years and in 2009 Liv Ullman and Steven Soderbergh will direct for the Company. STC has presented productions by Complicite, Cheek by Jowl, Out-of-Joint and the National Theatre of Great Britain. In 2001 STC performed at the Brooklyn Academy of Music in New York with its production of *The White Devil*, returned in 2006 with its production of *Hedda Gabler* and will return again in 2009 with its production of *A Streetcar Named Desire* which will also tour to Washington.

STC has launched and fostered the theatre careers of many of Australia's internationally renowned artists including Mel Gibson, Judy Davis, Hugo Weaving, Miranda Otto, Geoffrey Rush, Toni Collette, Rose Byrne and Cate Blanchett.

In 2006 STC launched its first acting ensemble, The Actors Company, which, over three years, has performed an extraordinary range of repertoire including award-winning productions of *Mother Courage & Her Children*, *The Season at Sarsaparilla*, *The Lost Echo*, *Gallipoli* and *The Wars of the Roses*. In 2009 STC introduced its new ensemble of theatre-makers The Residents who will perform right across the full range of the Company's activities including Main Stage, Next Stage and STC Ed productions.

To access detailed information on Sydney Theatre Company, its history and productions please contact our Archivist Judith Seeff at jseeff@sydneytheatre.com.au

STC Ed

Since 1987 Sydney Theatre Company has presented productions and workshops for school audiences. Sydney Theatre Company is committed to education by programming original **productions** and **workshops** that enthuse and engage the next generation of theatre-goers. Within the STC Ed programme we produce a season of plays as well as collaborate with leading theatre-for-young-people companies across Australia.

Often a young person's first experience of theatre is facilitated by teachers. STC ensures access to all of its Main Stage productions through the **Schools Day** programme as well as producing and touring theatre specifically crafted to resonate with young people.

It's vital that students engage with work of the highest quality. Art can expand your view of the world and encourage innovative, engaged thinking and compassion. Sydney Theatre Company has an extensive on-line resource for teachers and students. Visit www.sydneytheatre.com.au/education.

We encourage teachers to subscribe to regular e-news to keep informed as well as access **heavily discounted** tickets and special offers.

For further information on STC Ed, please contact the Education Coordinator Toni Murphy at education@sydneytheatre.com.au

A Streetcar Named Desire Schoolsday

IMPORTANT INFORMATION

Date: Wed 16 Sept

Venue: Sydney Theatre, 22 Hickson Rd

Suitability: Years 10-12

RUNNING ORDER

- 10.00 am Collect tickets from Sydney Theatre box office – 22 Hickson Rd, Walsh Bay
- 10.15am Assemble in foyer to be seated for pre-show discussion
- 10.30am Pre-show discussion in the theatre**
- 11.15am Break for Lunch (we recommend that students bring their lunch)
- 11.50am Assemble in foyer to be seated for performance
- 12.15pm Performance of A Streetcar Named Desire** (including interval)
- 3.30pm Conclusion of performance.** Students remain seated for **post-show Q&A** (approx 15 mins)

We respectfully ask that you discuss theatre etiquette with your students prior to coming to the performance.

Running Late?

Please contact Front of House on 9250 1904.

Booking Queries

Please contact the STC Ed Booking line on 02 9250 1778 or education@sydneytheatre.com.au

General Education Queries

Please contact Toni Murphy, Education Coordinator on 02 9250 1795 or education@sydneytheatre.com.au

Cast and Creatives

Cast

| | |
|--------------------------|--------------------|
| Blanche Dubois: | Cate Blanchett |
| Stanley Kowalski: | Joel Edgerton |
| Stella Kowalski: | Robin McLeavy |
| Mitch (Harold Mitchell): | Tim Richards |
| Eunice Hubbel: | Mandy McElhinney |
| Steve Hubbel: | Michael Denkha |
| Pablo Gonzales: | Jason Klarwein |
| Negro Woman: | Sara Zwangobani |
| A Strange Man (Doctor): | Russell Kiefel |
| A Strange Woman (Nurse): | Elaine Hudson |
| A Young Collector: | Morgan David Jones |
| A Mexican Woman: | Gertraud Ingeborg |
| Pianist: | Alan John |

Creatives

| | |
|----------------------------|-------------------|
| Director: | Liv Ullmann |
| Assistant to the Director: | Einar Bjorge |
| Set Designer: | Ralph Myers |
| Costume Designer: | Tess Schofield |
| Lighting Designer: | Nick Schlieper |
| Sound Designer: | Paul Charlier |
| Composer: | Alan John |
| Voice Consultant: | Charmian Gradwell |

Curriculum Links

Suitable for Years 10-12.

This is the last year this text is prescribed for the Year 12 Drama: American Theatre unit. However, it is an invaluable text for integrated study in the **Year 12 English Area of Study: Belonging**, especially in its representation of sibling relations (compared with the cousins Rosalind and Celia in the set text, Shakespeare's ***As You Like It***.)

THEATRICAL FORM AND STYLE | AN INTRODUCTION

An awareness of the theatrical form and style with which Williams is working is crucial in appreciating the layers of meaning in Ullman's STC production.

The play has both realistic, and even naturalistic, as well as expressionist and symbolist elements.

EXPRESSIONISM:

An anti-naturalistic movement chiefly associated with Germany after World War I. . . . Expressionism does not seek to "hold the mirror up to nature" or to present reality dispassionately; rather, it seeks to show the world as we feel (rather than literally see) it. (Barnet, Sylvan, et al. *Types of Drama* 794)

Expressionism extends realism and is highly theatrical in performance to show the fragmentation, mechanisation and/or dehumanisation of society.

Discuss the expressionist elements that Williams uses in scene eleven. What do they suggest about what Blanche is thinking and feeling?

SYMBOLISM:

Symbolism is deliberately anti-realistic as a better way to show truth in exploring death, madness and the dream world

This dramatic form uses symbols theatrically to encourage the audience to see meaning beyond the surface level. For example, what do you think is the symbolic meaning of the Mexican woman selling flowers for the dead in scene nine?

Are there symbolic meanings suggested by the names of places (e.g. Desire, Elysian, Cemeteries) in the play? If so, explain the symbolic meaning.

Streetcar uses symbolist techniques to explore madness and mental decay. When Blanche drifts back into her memory or into madness, sounds and music are used abstractly to reinforce the fact that these moments are non-real. For example, the sound effect of the gun shot, heard only by Blanche and the audience, signals the death of Blanche's husband symbolically to encourage the audience to see the significance of this moment in Blanche's life. What other examples of sound as a symbolist theatrical technique can you identify or recall?

Blanche's poetic language is also an example of symbolism. It is used to represent Blanche's slipping into her dream-world, and symbolically leads the audience to consider images of 'Old South' America clinging to a past of refinement and culture or pre-migrant America retreating to a world without 'Polaks'. Find three quotes to support this.

SET

Ralph Myers' set design blends contemporary monumental with period Realism, compressing the Kowalskis' apartment under a looming exterior wall whose only feature is the window of upstairs' neighbours, the Hubells, reached by the means of a dangerously steep fire escape ladder. No ornamental iron work or poetically distressed New Orleans flourishes here. It's grimy, cheap and there's nowhere to hide, a space ruthlessly calculated to keep a southern belle on edge.

Jason Blake SMH Monday 7 Sept 2009

Workshop Activity | In the street where you live ...

How does Williams describe the places in which the action of the play occurs? [New Orleans, the street, the Kowalski apartment]

How are these locations brought to life in the STC set design? Interpret the impact they have on you and what you learn about each of them and the characters relationship to them.

As you are introduced to each of the major characters in the first three scenes, how does the setting help you to understand them and their situation more? Are they comfortable, uncomfortable, is the character's presence jarring or harmonious?

Workshop Activity | Tension and Decay

Create a visual collage [using images, swatches and words] of these discoveries to replicate the locations, colours, intensity, mood and atmosphere, and shapes and levels of these locations.

The key feature of the set design is the stairs. How are they crucial to creating tension, visually in the space and theatrically, in the way the actors use them?

What indications of decay are there in the design of Myers' set? In your answer refer to the elements of design, such as line, shape, colour, texture and size.

Workshop Activity | A living, breathing space

Where is the focus in the STC set design? Where are the positions of power? How is movement of the characters determined by the space? How do the actors interact with the set in realistic and/or non-realistic ways for dramatic or theatrical effect?

What are the realistic elements and non-realistic elements of Myer's design and how do you distinguish between them?

What is the mood and atmosphere? Does it change? Compare the designs in Appendix A for their similarities to Meyer's designs: think big picture and in small detail.

The setting is predominantly domestic. How is the idea of an everyday domestic setting created? Do we get glimpses outside of this? What impact does the placement of doors and entrances and exits have on the action? Are the characters and audience aware of characters coming and going?

How are elements such as water which has a key symbolic function, realised in the production in a practical way on stage?

Workshop Activity | Design Concept

Jason Blake's review describes the intention or concept behind the set design as 'ruthlessly calculated to keep a southern belle on edge'. With reference to specific elements or features of the set, identify how it creates tension or discomfort for Blanche.

Refer to the set design images in Appendix A and suggest what the intention or concept behind the set design might be. Be sure to support your thoughts with evidence from what you see in the set and what it creates on the stage for the world in which they characters live and the audience.

Propose your own concept for a set design for your production of the play. What intention do you think the set should fulfil to bring to life the mood and atmosphere as well as the story Williams is telling? Express your proposal in a succinct statement like that offered by Jason Blake.

LIGHTING

Nick Schlipper's lighting artfully blends the fluttering incandescence Blanche craves with the strokes of hard light she knows will reveal her.

Jason Blake SMH Monday 7 Sept 2009

Discussion Activities | Let there be light ...

Images of light, both literal and figurative, appear throughout the play. Find at least two references to light in the text and explain their significance to the characters and the moment in the play. What does it mean to you?

How is lighting used to conceal or reveal? How does it support the inner journey or world of Blanche? How is it cruel? Answer through reference to specific moment in the play.

Discuss Blanche's response to the light bulb in Scene Three (p. 55). Light, too, has symbolic importance in the play. Why is the paper lantern important for Blanche?

In Scene Six, Blanche describes her experience with love in terms of light imagery. Yet scene six takes place mostly in the dark in candlelight. Why? Why does Blanche prefer dim light?

How does lighting become an additional character in the play? Consider its roles and relationships with the characters, its objective or conflict with each of them.

Discussion Activities | The nature of colour ...

Related to light is the use of colours in this play. For instance, the tender blue of the sky (13), the primary colours of the poker players' shirts (45) and the "red-hot" of the vendor's (44). What do they mean? And what do you think about Williams' style, or his use of symbols and images?

Workshop Activities | Shadows, shapes and light

Using a lamp and using pieces of fabric or lighting gel or paper, create shadows or conceal parts of a performer's face. Vary the placement of the lamp and the choice of "filter" to create different effects. For example, one character is in full light while another is in partial shadow. Choose scenes from the play or improvise dialogue to perform in various states of lighting.

Which character do we trust/ how does this impact on our connection to or understanding of these characters?

Workshop Activities | The impact of lighting

<http://www.ltslighting.com/portfolio.html>

Follow this link to view images highlighting the lighting design of another production of *Streetcar*. What are the dominant features of the lighting design in these images? What mood and atmosphere is created? Suggest where in the play these still photos might come from.

COSTUME

Workshop Activity | Fabrics that travel

Consider and describe the costume changes for Blanche in Williams' script and how they are realised in the STC production. Chart them to Blanche's emotional journey by plotting them on a graph that will end up representing the physical realisation of her disintegration.

Express your graph of 'disintegration through costume' as a performance. You may employ drawings, humans as models or use coat hangers as your theatrical device and in each movement along the graph, make changes in texture, fabric, layering, colour, and ornament. Focus on creating this as a movement piece that travels across the space.

Workshop Activity | Peeling back layers

In groups put layers of clothing on, and create a movement sequence where these layers are removed for dramatic effect as we get closer to the real identity or true state of the character[s]. To support your performance you may add three lines of dialogue and/or music.

You may wish to watch the choreography from this routine called *The Four Sections* by Mia Michaels on *So You Think You Can Dance*, USA Series 5, Episode 22, Season Finale Part 1.

Kayla and Jeanine met with choreographer Mia Michaels to learn contemporary choreography. The piece is about the journey they've gone on and the layers they have shed, and it requires the use of the entire large stage. Dancing to "The Four Sections: IV. Full Orchestra" by Steve Reich. These two ladies showed off their strength while being graceful, and by the end they weren't wearing very much! Adam joked that it was "like watching the world's longest wardrobe malfunction." Mary thought this piece had a very relevant concept tonight. She said that Jeanine and Kayla are, "the strongest two women we've ever had in the finale." Nigel thought this dance really stood out and he didn't want it to end. He said that Jeanine peaked at the right time.

<http://www.fox.com/dance/recaps/season5/>

Workshop Activity | Under the layers

Study the images of costume design from several productions.

What similarities do you note in design elements for each character?

What is it about this play that ensures most designers are limited but respectful to the playwright's directions?

In what way is costume used metaphorically to explore the need, desire or forceful removal of layers of the characters lives and personalities? In what ways to characters use costume to hide their inner world or put on a brave face?

SOUND

Tension, so crucial to any interpretation, seldom flags for which much credit goes to sound designer Paul Charlier, for his exceptional orchestration of piano, street atmosphere, period juke box hits and the nightmarish sounds of Blanche's head.

Jason Blake SMH Monday 7 Sept 2009

Debating Activity | Listening in....

Sound is often regarded as an additional character in William's play.

Based on your experience of the STC production, argue for or against this statement, providing reasons and specific examples from the production. Consider how sound had an impact on other characters in the play, created tension, made you feel something and enhanced the dramatic meaning.

For example – “The music of the blue piano grows louder”.

Blanche grows hysterical and defensive in the belief that Stella blames her for the loss of Belle Reve. Blanche adopts this tone to hide the truth that she has lost control and is unhappy. The truth is she resents Stella for the fact she left and now has a relationship of desire with Stanley. The music expresses her bluffing and separation from the truth of situation.

Pre-production Activities | The sounds of New Orleans

The play includes many stage directions referring to music. What music and songs are present in the first three scenes (e.g. "the blue piano" on pp. 13, 32, 43; and polka , p. 31)? What is the significance of that music? In what ways is it symbolic? How does the music relate to the characters?

Look for references to the "streetcar." Note when streetcars are heard or described. What significance do you see in these words associated with the streetcar: "Desire," "Cemetaria," and "Elysian Fields"? What meaning[s] are associated with the streetcar?

Workshop Activity | What's in a sound track?

Research New Orleans music to discover the dominant rhythms and sounds and the influences and context from which this style of music was created.

Create a soundscape that communicates the internal feelings and an emotional journey from one emotional place to another e.g. 5 stages of grieving.

Choose key scenes and find samples of music to create a soundscape to capture the inner experience of the characters. The music might be juxtaposed, contradictory or supportive of their inner experience.

Workshop Activity | Percussion and the world of the play

What are the everyday rituals that are represented in the play? In groups, playbuild a mime performance of one of these rituals. Choose one of the following internal states to communicate to audience:

- Grief
- Anger
- Love
- Wanting to escape
- Living in a fantasy
- Desperation
- Violence

Complete the ritual to the accompaniment of sound that could be created through found objects, voices or pre-recorded.

INTERNET RESOURCES:

[Tennessee Williams](#): general introduction with photos of Williams and his hometown, bibliography and important links; from [Mississippi Writers page](#).

[Desire Streetcar](#): photos and some information about streetcars, especially the Desire line.

STC Ed website: sydneytheatre.com.au/education and click on the links for the play

APPENDIX A

A Streetcar Named Desire
April, 1993, University of Kansas, Directed by Jack Wright





Sydney Theatre Company and UBS Investment Bank present



A Streetcar Named Desire

by Tennessee Williams

Directed by Liv Ullmann

Teacher's Resource Kit – Post Show Resources

Written and compiled by Elizabeth Surbey

Copyright

Copyright protects this Teacher's Resource Kit. Except for purposes permitted by the Copyright Act, reproduction by whatever means is prohibited. However, limited photocopying for classroom use only is permitted by educational institutions.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | |
|--|----|
| Sydney Theatre Company | 3 |
| STC Ed | 3 |
| IMPORTANT INFORMATION..... | 4 |
| RUNNING ORDER..... | 4 |
| Cast and Creatives | 5 |
| Curriculum Links | 5 |
| Post- Performance Questions | 6 |
| Genre..... | 6 |
| Themes & Issues | 6 |
| Setting | 6 |
| Characters | 6 |
| Motifs & Symbols..... | 7 |
| Set Design..... | 7 |
| Costume Design | 7 |
| Lighting..... | 7 |
| Sound & Music | 7 |
| Props | 7 |
| Webquest at the STC site OR Prompters for a great post-show class discussion | 8 |
| Student Activities | 9 |
| Character Profile/Analysis | 9 |
| Theatre Design | 9 |
| Street Scene Activity | 10 |
| Physical Character Activities | 10 |
| Music and Sound Effects..... | 11 |
| Expressionism and Symbolism..... | 12 |
| Writing Activities..... | 13 |
| Essay planning..... | 13 |
| More Making Theatre Ideas..... | 13 |

Sydney Theatre Company

Sydney Theatre Company, as the premier theatre company in Australia, has been a major force in Australian drama since its establishment in 1978. It was created by the New South Wales Government, following the demise of the Old Tote Theatre Company. The company presents an annual twelve-play program at its home base The Wharf, on Sydney's harbour at Walsh Bay, the nearby Sydney Theatre, which STC also manages, and as the resident theatre company of the Sydney Opera House. Current Artistic Directors, Cate Blanchett and Andrew Upton joined the Company at the beginning of 2008.

STC actively fosters relationships and collaborations with international artists and companies. Renowned directors Michael Blakemore, Max Stafford-Clark, Howard Davies, Declan Donnellan and Philip Seymour Hoffman have worked with STC in recent years and in 2009 Liv Ullman and Steven Soderbergh will direct for the Company. STC has presented productions by Complicite, Cheek by Jowl, Out-of-Joint and the National Theatre of Great Britain. In 2001 STC performed at the Brooklyn Academy of Music in New York with its production of *The White Devil*, returned in 2006 with its production of *Hedda Gabler* and will return again in 2009 with its production of *A Streetcar Named Desire* which will also tour to Washington.

STC has launched and fostered the theatre careers of many of Australia's internationally renowned artists including Mel Gibson, Judy Davis, Hugo Weaving, Miranda Otto, Geoffrey Rush, Toni Collette, Rose Byrne and Cate Blanchett.

In 2006 STC launched its first acting ensemble, The Actors Company, which, over three years, has performed an extraordinary range of repertoire including award-winning productions of *Mother Courage & Her Children*, *The Season at Sarsaparilla*, *The Lost Echo*, *Gallipoli* and *The Wars of the Roses*. In 2009 STC introduced its new ensemble of theatre-makers The Residents who will perform right across the full range of the Company's activities including Main Stage, Next Stage and STC Ed productions.

To access detailed information on Sydney Theatre Company, its history and productions please contact our Archivist Judith Seeff at jseeff@sydneytheatre.com.au

STC Ed

Since 1987 Sydney Theatre Company has presented productions and workshops for school audiences. Sydney Theatre Company is committed to education by programming original **productions** and **workshops** that enthuse and engage the next generation of theatre-goers. Within the STC Ed programme we produce a season of plays as well as collaborate with leading theatre-for-young-people companies across Australia.

Often a young person's first experience of theatre is facilitated by teachers. STC ensures access to all of its Main Stage productions through the **Schools Day** programme as well as producing and touring theatre specifically crafted to resonate with young people.

It's vital that students engage with work of the highest quality. Art can expand your view of the world and encourage innovative, engaged thinking and compassion. Sydney Theatre Company has an extensive on-line resource for teachers and students. Visit www.sydneytheatre.com.au/education.

We encourage teachers to subscribe to regular e-news to keep informed as well as access **heavily discounted** tickets and special offers.

For further information on STC Ed, please contact the Education Coordinator Toni Murphy at education@sydneytheatre.com.au

A Streetcar Named Desire Schoolsday

IMPORTANT INFORMATION

Date: Wed 16 Sept
Venue: Sydney Theatre, 22 Hickson Rd
Suitability: Years 10-12

RUNNING ORDER

| | |
|----------------|--|
| 10.00 am | Collect tickets from Sydney Theatre box office – 22 Hickson Rd, Walsh Bay |
| 10.15am | Assemble in foyer to be seated for pre-show discussion |
| 10.30am | Pre-show discussion in the theatre |
| 11.15am | Break for Lunch (we recommend that students bring their lunch) |
| 11.50am | Assemble in foyer to be seated for performance |
| 12.15pm | Performance of A Streetcar Named Desire (including interval) |
| 3.30pm | Conclusion of performance. Students remain seated for post-show Q&A (approx 15 mins) |

We respectfully ask that you discuss theatre etiquette with your students prior to coming to the performance.

Running Late?

Please contact Front of House on 9250 1904.

Booking Queries

Please contact the STC Ed Booking line on 02 9250 1778 or education@sydneytheatre.com.au

General Education Queries

Please contact Toni Murphy, Education Coordinator on 02 9250 1795 or education@sydneytheatre.com.au

Cast and Creatives

Cast

| | |
|--------------------------|--------------------|
| Blanche Dubois: | Cate Blanchett |
| Stanley Kowalski: | Joel Edgerton |
| Stella Kowalski: | Robin McLeavy |
| Mitch (Harold Mitchell): | Tim Richards |
| Eunice Hubbel: | Mandy McElhinney |
| Steve Hubbel: | Michael Denkha |
| Pablo Gonzales: | Jason Klarwein |
| Negro Woman: | Sara Zwangobani |
| A Strange Man (Doctor): | Russell Kiefel |
| A Strange Woman (Nurse): | Elaine Hudson |
| A Young Collector: | Morgan David Jones |
| A Mexican Woman: | Gertraud Ingeborg |
| Pianist: | Alan John |

Creatives

| | |
|----------------------------|-------------------|
| Director: | Liv Ullmann |
| Assistant to the Director: | Einar Bjorge |
| Set Designer: | Ralph Myers |
| Costume Designer: | Tess Schofield |
| Lighting Designer: | Nick Schlieper |
| Sound Designer: | Paul Charlier |
| Composer: | Alan John |
| Voice Consultant: | Charmian Gradwell |

Curriculum Links

Suitable for Years 10-12.

This is the last year this text is prescribed for the Year 12 Drama: American Theatre unit. However, it is an invaluable text for integrated study in the **Year 12 English Area of Study: Belonging**, especially in its representation of sibling relations (compared with the cousins Rosalind and Celia in the set text, Shakespeare's *As You Like It*.)

Post- Performance Questions

All plays are about decay. They are about the ends of a situation which has achieved itself fully, and the inevitable disorder which ensues until equilibrium is again established.

...The theater exposes us to the notion of decay, to the necessity of change: in comedy to the tenuousness of our social state, in tragedy to the inevitability of death. It is a constant human need, to dramatize,

...The dramatists and the play strive to create order out of a disordered state.

David Mamet *A Whore's Profession: Notes and Essays* Faber & Faber 1994.

Genre

A Streetcar Named Desire is a classic dramatic play, based on Contemporary American Realism. How do you think the play sits in this genre? Is it typical of the genre, or does it work beyond it?

While the play is a drama, there are also moments of humour. Do you think the comedy works and how comfortably does it sit alongside the drama and tragedy of the story?

Themes & Issues

Some of the themes and issues explored in this play include Tradition and Progress, love and family, betrayal, deception, violence and honour. Can you think of others? What about 'Truth', 'conflict', and Tension? Think about the ways in which the performances interpret or convey the themes of the play and whether you think they are successful.

Setting

Set in a small flat revealing co-habitation and a bathroom as central divide – does the set bring about a feeling of claustrophobia and an almost unbearable closeness in the living conditions – the immediate neighbours living above can be heard throughout as well. The outside street scene opens the play to reveal Blanche as well as finding her left out at the conclusion. How does the set work for the dramatic journey? Why has the playwright chosen this setting for his play? Is the setting relevant and what impact does it have in the telling of the story? Do you think the play would work if it was set in a different time and place?

Characters

A Streetcar Named Desire has a cast of twelve characters. There are four main characters in the main story – Stanley Kowalski, his wife Stella, her sister Blanche Dubois and Stanley's friend and workmate Harold Mitchell (Mitch). Are these characters convincing? How well realised are they? Does the interaction between the characters make sense? Consider the four main performances – how have the actors interpreted their characters? What strengths and weaknesses can you identify? Do you think the actors have succeeded in bringing these characters to life?

What place in the play / production do the other roles have?

Motifs & Symbols

Can you identify any motifs or symbols in this play? How are they presented and what meaning to they have in the play? As an example, Of some note were the costuming choices and in particular for me, the colour scheme of Blanche and Stella that would be followed throughout the pla – Balnche somewhat blue steel and pale grey – and Stella earthy warm pastels and apricots. The colour of the flat itself seemed to capture Stella. The script makes some reference to Stanley’s choices throughout – what is your impression of his costumes for each major scene change? What does it mean and why is it important?

Set Design

How effective do you think the set design is in moving the action of the play forward? Consider how the actors move and interact with the set. The set design makes use of a certain claustrophobia and ‘proxemics’ are very important – how effective do you think this is and how does it support the story?

There are fairly significant scene changes that find the actors and crew moving about between to make these changes happen. Think about how time and place is established in this play. How effective is the set design in creating these environments? Does the set add or detract from the performances? What works and what do you think could be done differently?

Costume Design

How is costuming used to bring the time, place and characters of the play to life? Is the costuming effective? What works? What do you think could be changed or improved? Of course you have already discussed some of the designers ideas in the Motifs and symbols discussion.

Lighting

How is the lighting used to move the action forward or highlight particular moments or moods in this performance?

Consider lighting design in terms of colour, timing and the varying degrees of darkness and light.

Notice how these elements work together to create atmosphere, place, mood. Is the lighting effective?

How? (*recall the scene where a storm builds outside the flat including flashes of lightning*)

Sound & Music

Do the sound and music in this play enhance the story, action and emotion of the play, or detract/distract from it? What effect does it have on the telling of the story?

Can you identify any musical themes in this play? If so, how did they occur and what impact did they have?

Are any sound effects used and how effective are they?

One piece of music is directly referenced by the character of Blanche when she waits for it to subside explaining “There now, the shot! It always stops after that.” Scene 9

Props

Consider the props used in this play and think about how they are used—are these just necessary physical objects for the actors, or is there a deeper significance in their presence?

Webquest at the STC site OR Prompters for a great post-show class discussion

- What is the play called?
- Who wrote it?
- Who is the director?
- Where is it playing?
- For how long?
- Who are the main actors, the supporting actors?
- Who are the main characters of the play?

- What is the play about? What are the main ideas it presents, the issues it confronts?
- Do you think the playwright has something original or profound to say about the human condition?

- Is the play typical of one particular genre? Is it a comedy? A tragedy? A combination of both?

- What effect does the work have on the viewer? Take a critical position. Where do you stand on certain issues? You might consider what's missing, what's worth seeing, what it is you value the most. Is it compelling, difficult, complex, simple, overwhelming, aesthetically appealing, vague, dry, humorous, inviting, cryptic, stale, enigmatic, logical, edible, delectable, tasteless, warm, frightening, too theoretically based, too abstract, tactile, dark, invigorating, gossipy, mechanical, predictable, metaphysical, winsome, sophisticated, grotesque, ingratiating, flamboyantly energetic, dizzyingly enjoyable, energetic, full of noisy panache, painful, devastating, too civilized, abrasive, too subtle? ? ? Does it overwhelm you, 'go against the grain,' 'evoke pity or fear,' 'invoke a furious response'?

- Does the performance realise its potential? Do the actors fit the description of the characters you had in mind? Gesture and voice are extremely important when it comes to delivering a performance and capturing character. Did you notice Stanley when he first appears and throws the 'meat' to Stella? What about his next entrance? What did you think of the Young Man's appearance on stage?

- How does this play contribute to the actor, director, or designer's portfolio? How does the work relate to a previous play, to the kind of work they do in general? Who has the director chosen to work with? Why?

- What information can you glean from other reviews, academic essays in journals, interviews? How does this information affect your response? What expectations are set up? Are they fulfilled? Have you had the opportunity to see one of the famous film versions of the play – Marlon Brando or Treat Williams as Stanley Kowalski?

- You might want to ask yourself how the blocking, lighting, stage design and costumes influence the outcome of the play. If you choose to take this tack, you should probably take your audience into account. Will they be familiar with the terminology, theory, or references? If not, it might be important to provide some definitions or to tone down the language. Is the script further complicated or complimented through the use of special effects, flashbacks, recurring image motifs, lights, staging, or other visual language? Has the play been made into a film? How does the screenplay compare to the stage production?

- How important is the historical perspective – eg: Post WWII, Depression era, Landed gentry and small towns versus the city and industry or progress?

Student Activities

Character Profile/Analysis

- Write down all the actual practical things you know about one or more of the characters in the play.
- Using freeze frames, (like a storyboard for a film) chart one or more characters' emotional journeys through the play.

Theatre Design

STREETCAR is set in one location with multiple dimensions that allow a 'window' into the characters actual lives as well as their psyches. The play takes place across several changing days then months – How can this time change be developed in the set design?

[opening stage directions - below]

The exterior of a two-storey corner building on a street in New Orleans which is named Elysian Fields and runs between the L & N tracks and the river. The section is poor but unlike corresponding sections in other American cities, it has a raffish charm. The houses are mostly white frame, weathered grey, with rickety outside stairs and galleries and quaintly ornamented gables. The building contains two flats, upstairs and down. Faded white stairs ascend to the entrances of both. It is first dark of an evening early in May. The sky that shows around the dim white building is a peculiarly tender blue, almost turquoise, which invests the scene with a kind of lyricism and gracefully attenuates the atmosphere of decay. You can almost feel the warm breath of the brown river beyond the river warehouses with their faint redolences of bananas and coffee. A corresponding air is evoked by the music of Negro entertainers at a bar-room around the corner. In this part of New Orleans you are practically always just around the corner, or a few doors down the street, from a tinny piano being played with the infatuated fluency of brown fingers. This 'blue piano' expresses the spirit of the life which goes on here.

Have students use the opening stage directions and design sets, props etc for a naturalist style. How will changes of time be clear to audiences?

Have students make models or use sketches to present back to the class to justify their choices.

Street Scene Activity

Ask each student to create a character - a character that we might find in this part of New Orleans to help set the location. Create a street scene from Elysian Fields.

Perhaps allocate or ask each student to choose a photograph of a character to work from. (*use google images for your research*) Encourage students to explore ways in which the character might sleep, brush their teeth or hair, drink, walk, greet other people, make a telephone call, eat an apple etc.

In developing their characters have students pay attention as to how their posture, movement style, expression, breathing and voice can be used to reflect their characters personality, age, disposition, physical condition. (*Use hats, props, costume items as an option*)

Physical Character Activities

Exercise 1

Each student should attempt to create a character highlighting:

Body shape (posture and stance), attitude, the situation they are in (where are they?), then a typical thing that the character would say and the way they would say it.

Exercise 2

Ask each student to create a monologue for their character. In doing so, students will need to decide how this character might comment on the play or the people of the play in some way – have this character deliver their monologue. (*reflect on the flower seller that Blanche hears from the street or the boy who visits*)

Who is their character talking to?

What is his/her motivation to speak?

How should the piece start / end?

How would the character speak? E.g. Accent, speech patterns, language.

Students may incorporate costume and / or props.

View monologues. Identify the skills involved in sustaining a characterisation.

Music and Sound Effects

Exercise 1

Allocate small groups a piece of music each. (*perhaps use the 'blue piano' of the opening stage directions*)
Ask them to listen to it several times, and then to share and articulate what they feel it suggests or evokes.

Using the music as inspiration, have the groups script and then rehearse a scene (dialogue) to be performed with their given piece of music as background mood-music.

View these. Did the music add to the atmosphere of the scene/s? How?

Comment on the effect the music had on the scenes. Would the impact of the scenes differ if performed with no background music? Would the impact of the scenes differ if performed with different background music? (try this)

Exercise 2

In small groups use voice and instruments to create and record (optional) soundscapes representing locations such as a sports arena, amusement park, busy highway, mall, deserted house. Or elements and emotions such as cold, heat, a storm, joy, fear, relief danger, misery.

Play or perform these for one another. See if they are all clearly identifiable. Discuss how groups used tempo, volume, rhythm, pause, speed and pitch to evoke different feelings or atmospheres.

Expressionism and Symbolism

EXPRESSIONISM

The definition of expressionism given below provides a good starting point:

An artistic and literary movement originating in Germany at the beginning of the twentieth century, which sought to express **emotions** rather than to represent reality, characterised by the use of **symbolism** and of **exaggeration** and **distortion**.

(Collins's English Dictionary, 3rd edition, 1991)

This definition goes further:

a term coined in the early twentieth century to describe a movement in art, then in literature, the theatre, and cinema, characterised by **boldness, distortion, and forceful representation of the emotions**. It embraces a wide variety of moods – **satirical, grotesque, visionary, exclamatory, violent but always naturalistic**.

(The Oxford Companion to English Literature, New Edition, ed; M. Drabble, 1985)

In the theatre the influence of Appia and expressionism is clearest in evidence where stages are reduced to only basic requirements, often left bare with just a few drapes. Lighting became increasingly important to mirror and reinforce imagery in expressionist plays; light and shade, directional beams are used to exaggerate some aspects of the set and reduce others. Often the intention of using distorted pieces on the set coupled with violent colours is to remove the action from reality into the realms of subjective consciousness. Flashbacks, dreams, imagery, transformations from one scene to another can be enhanced by 'expressionist' means.

from R A Banks and P Marson *Drama and Theatre Arts* Hodder & Stoughton 1998. p 324-325

SYMBOLISM

The representation of something in symbolic form or the attribution of symbolic meaning or character to something . . . a late nineteenth century movement in art that sought to express mystical or abstract ideas through the symbolic use of images.

(Collins's English Dictionary, 3rd edition, 1991)

The symbolist aim, to use their own description, was to 'detheatricalise' the theatre; that is, to strip it of its naturalism and 'allow the word to create the décor'. Open-weave muslin or Hessian hung across the stage was intended to create illusion or to suggest haziness when used in conjunction with lighting. The aim was to be non-specific but evocative and to bring together sensations brought alive by shape and colour.....

Appia and Craig went further and used light and shadow (sometimes flickering) to enhance the symbolism of their sets and to give them three-dimensional shapes. To Appia the newly introduced use of electric lighting gave fresh opportunities to create mood and evoke sensations.

from R A Banks and P Marson *Drama and Theatre Arts* Hodder & Stoughton 1998, p327

➤ What makes the distinction between Realism and Expressionism / Symbolism in the play?

Writing Activities

- Write the last letter exchange between Stella and Blanche
- Write a dialogue between Stella and Blanche at one of the relatives funerals
- Write a scene of dialogue between Stella and Stanley when she first returns with the baby – in regards to Blanche and Stanley’s physical relationship
- Look at the themes explored in *A Streetcar Named Desire* and identify moments in the play when these were explored.
- Write a short passage which describes the feelings you had when you watched the play
- Write a Critical analysis of text in the role of critic / audience member
- Write an historical account for a new *Companion to Theatre*
- Write a newspaper / journal / magazine article about the play in the context of the topic of study
- Write a newspaper / journal / magazine article about the playwright/s

Essay planning

How does American Drama act as a mirror to reflect our society?

- In what ways is American society (or a social context) reflected in the plays studied?
- What are the beliefs, attitudes, concerns, and issues of the plays?
- What theatrical techniques and dramatic conventions are used in the plays?
- Why are these techniques and conventions used, and what is their purpose?

More Making Theatre Ideas

- Improvisations and experimentation based on aspects of the text
- Design costumes for the main characters (consider the many references Williams gives to the costumes of the play in the text)
- Make a video / radio promo for a new production of the play
- Create Publicity and promotional material for a production of the play