

# 12.4.1 Lesson 6

## Introduction

In this lesson, students read and analyze Scenes Seven and Eight of *A Streetcar Named Desire* (from “It is late afternoon in mid-September” to “supporting her with his arm, murmuring indistinguishably as they go outside”), in which Stanley informs Stella of the information he has gathered about Blanche’s life in Laurel and presents Blanche with a bus ticket at her birthday dinner. Students explore the development of Stanley’s character through his interactions with Blanche and Stella, and analyze his motivations for his treatment of Blanche. Student learning is assessed via a Quick Write at the end of the lesson: Analyze Stanley’s motivations for his treatment of Blanche in Scenes Seven and Eight.

For homework, students read Scene Nine of *A Streetcar Named Desire* and annotate for character development. Additionally, students review Scene Six of *A Streetcar Named Desire* and write a brief response to the following prompt: How has Mitch and Blanche’s relationship changed between Scene Six and Scene Nine?

## Standards

Assessed Standard(s)	
RL.11-12.3	Analyze the impact of the author's choices regarding how to develop and relate elements of a story or drama (e.g., where a story is set, how the action is ordered, how the characters are introduced and developed).
Addressed Standard(s)	
W. 11-12.9.a	<p>Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.</p> <p>a. Apply <i>grades 11-12 Reading standards</i> to literature (e.g., “Demonstrate knowledge of eighteenth-, nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century foundational works of American literature, including how two or more texts from the same period treat similar themes or topics”).</p>

## Assessment

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### Assessment(s)

Student learning is assessed via a Quick Write at the end of the lesson. Students answer the following prompt, citing textual evidence to support analysis and inferences drawn from the text.

- Analyze Stanley's motivations for his treatment of Blanche in Scenes Seven and Eight.

### High Performance Response(s)

A High Performance Response should:

- Analyze Stanley's motivations for his treatment of Blanche in Scenes Seven and Eight (e.g., By destroying Blanche's credibility and demonstrating to Mitch and Stella that "Sister Blanche is no lily" (p. 119), Stanley seeks to reassert his own image of himself as more than "common" (p. 118), proclaiming himself "the king around here" (p. 131) and "one hundred percent American" (p. 134). Stanley's desperation to assert himself reflects his determination to reestablish his relationship with Stella, which he feels that Blanche's presence has disrupted. His angry accusation to Stella on page 131 that "'Pig—Polack—disgusting—vulgar—greasy!'"—them kind of words have been on your tongue and your sister's too much around here" suggests his fear that Stella may come to share Blanche's negative view of him. Stanley imagines that by driving Blanche away, he can return to his previous life with Stella, telling his wife that, with Blanche gone, "[i]t's gonna be all right again between you and me the way that it was" (p. 133). Stanley's treatment of Blanche is driven by a deep insecurity and a fear that his identity and way of life are threatened.).

## Vocabulary

**Vocabulary to provide directly (will not include extended instruction)**

- saccharine (adj.) - too sweet or sentimental
- contrapuntally (adv.) - in counterpoint; as a combination of two or more melodies that are played together
- squeamishness (n.) - ease with which a person is shocked, offended, or disgusted
- blithely (adv.) - happily and without worry
- degenerate (n.) - a person who has declined, as in morals or character, from a type of standard considered normal
- amiability (n.) - friendliness

**Vocabulary to teach (may include direct word work and/or questions)**

- None.

**Additional vocabulary to support English Language Learners (to provide directly)**

- dope (n.) - information about someone or something that is not commonly or immediately known
- the cat's out of the bag (idiom) - the secret has been revealed
- contemptible (adj.) - not worthy of respect or approval
- beau (n.) - a woman's male lover or friend
- hoity-toity (adj.) - having or showing the insulting attitude of people who think that they are better, smarter, or more important than other people

## Lesson Agenda/Overview

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Student-Facing Agenda	% of Lesson
<b>Standards &amp; Text:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Standards: RL.11-12.3, W.11-12.9.a</li> <li>Text: <i>A Streetcar Named Desire</i> by Tennessee Williams, Scenes Seven and Eight</li> </ul>	
<b>Learning Sequence:</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Introduction of Lesson Agenda</li> <li>2. Homework Accountability</li> <li>3. Small-Group Reading and Discussion</li> <li>4. Quick Write</li> <li>5. Closing</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. 5%</li> <li>2. 20%</li> <li>3. 55%</li> <li>4. 15%</li> <li>5. 5%</li> </ol>

## Materials

- Student copies of the Short Response Rubric and Checklist (refer to 12.4.1 Lesson 1) (optional)

## Learning Sequence

How to Use the Learning Sequence	
Symbol	Type of Text & Interpretation of the Symbol
10%	Percentage indicates the percentage of lesson time each activity should take.
no symbol	Plain text indicates teacher action.
	<b>Bold text indicates questions for the teacher to ask students.</b>
	<i>Italicized text indicates a vocabulary word.</i>
►	Indicates student action(s).
💬	Indicates possible student response(s) to teacher questions.
❗	Indicates instructional notes for the teacher.

## Activity 1: Introduction of Lesson Agenda

5%

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Begin by reviewing the agenda and the assessed standard for this lesson: RL.11-12.3. In this lesson, students explore Stanley's motivations for his treatment of Blanche in Scenes Seven and Eight of *A Streetcar Named Desire*.

- Students look at the agenda.

## Activity 2: Homework Accountability

**20%**

Instruct students to take out their responses to the first part of the previous lesson's homework assignment. (Conduct a brief search into the polka "Varsouviana" and the song "It's Only a Paper Moon" and write 3-4 sentences summarizing your findings.) Instruct students to form pairs and discuss their responses.

- Student responses may include:
  - The "Varsouviana," or "Varsoviennne," is a dance of Polish origin that combines elements of several dances such as the polka, the mazurka, and the waltz, as well as the music that accompanies the dance. The name "Varsouviana" means "from Warsaw." It was popular during the nineteenth century in America.
  - Polka music such as the "Varsouviana" enjoyed a revival following World War II as Eastern European immigrants brought the dance from Europe to the United States, and the dance became an expression of immigrant identity, in particular Polish identity.
  - The "Varsouviana" is a lively, vigorous couple dance, which evokes innocent, youthful happiness.
  - "It's Only a Paper Moon" is a song written in 1933 by Harold Arlen, E. Y. Harburg, and Billy Rose. The song was not successful until World War II, when popular artists such as Ella Fitzgerald and the Nat King Cole Trio recorded their own versions of it. The song has continued to inspire works of art such as the 1973 Oscar winner *Paper Moon* and Japanese author Haruki Murakami's novel *1Q84* (2011).
  - The lyrics of "It's Only a Paper Moon" describe an artificial landscape, made up of a "paper moon / Sailing over a cardboard sea" and a "canvas sky / Hanging over a muslin tree." In the chorus, the singer suggests that if his or her lover accepts this artificial scene—and by extension, him or her—as true, even though it is "phony as can be," then it will become real, singing, "it wouldn't be make-believe if you believed in me."

Lead a brief whole-class discussion of student responses.

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Instruct students to take out their responses to the second part of the previous lesson's homework assignment. (Additionally, write a brief response to the following prompt: How does Williams's use of the polka "Varsouviana" (p. 115) contribute to the development of Blanche's character at the end of Scene Six?) Instruct student pairs to discuss their responses.

- Student responses may include:
  - The polka music that Blanche identifies as the "Varsouviana" (p. 115) contributes to the development of Blanche's character by marking the trauma that has shaped her life: her husband's suicide, which Blanche recounts as the music plays on page 115. The same music plays as Blanche tells Mitch about how Allan "stuck the revolver into his mouth, and fired" (p. 115), associating the music with the events that Blanche recounts.
  - The "Varsouviana" (p. 115) and the changes in the music that Williams describes parallel Blanche's state of mind at the end of Scene Six. As Blanche reflects in a melancholy or gloomy way on her idealized past and discovery of her husband's affair with another man, the music begins "*in a minor key faint with distance*" (p. 115).
  - The pause in the music as Blanche describes "a shot" evokes the shock of Allan's suicide (p. 115).
  - The music resumes and "*increases*," suggesting Blanche's panic and turmoil as she relives the moment when she "ran out" to find her husband dead and recalls the part that her words "I saw! I know! You disgust me ..." (p. 115) played in his suicide.
  - Finally the "Varsouviana" tune "*fades out*" as Mitch comforts Blanche on page 116, reflecting her renewed calm and sense of hope as she cries, "Sometimes—there's God—so quickly!" (p. 116).
- **Differentiation Consideration:** If students struggle, consider posing the following scaffolding question:

**How does the polka music, the "Varsouviana," relate to Blanche's story on page 115?**

- The polka music that starts on page 115 is the same music that Blanche and her husband were dancing to on the night that he died. As the music begins to play, Blanche tells Mitch that she and her husband "danced the Varsouviana" (p. 115) immediately before his suicide.

Lead a brief whole-class discussion of student responses.

### Activity 3: Small-Group Reading and Discussion

55%

Instruct students to form small groups. Post or project each set of questions below for students to discuss.

- **Differentiation Consideration:** Consider posting or projecting the following guiding question to support students in their reading through this lesson:

**Why does Stanley treat Blanche in the way that he does in Scenes Seven and Eight?**

Instruct students in each group to each take one of the three roles of Stanley, Blanche, and Stella. Instruct student groups to read aloud Scene Seven (from “*It is late afternoon in mid-September*” to “*The distant piano goes into a hectic breakdown*”).

Provide students with the definitions of *saccharine*, *contrapuntally*, *squeamishness*, *blithely*, and *degenerate*.

- Students may be familiar with some of these words. Consider asking students to volunteer definitions before providing them to the group.
  - Students write the definitions of *saccharine*, *contrapuntally*, *squeamishness*, *blithely*, and *degenerate* on their copies of the text or in a vocabulary journal.
- **Differentiation Consideration:** Consider providing students with the definitions of *dope*, *the cat’s out of the bag*, and *contemptible*.
  - Students write the definitions of *dope*, *the cat’s out of the bag*, and *contemptible* on their copies of the text or in a vocabulary journal.

Instruct student groups to answer the following questions before sharing out with the class. Instruct students to continue to annotate the text as they read and discuss (W.11-12.9.a).

**What does Stanley’s conversation with Stella on pages 117-119 suggest about his attitude toward Blanche?**

- Student responses may include:
  - Stanley’s conversation with Stella suggests that he feels powerful and superior in relation to Blanche as a result of the information that he has gathered about her. He tells Stella that he has “got th’ dope on [her] big sister” (p. 118) and that he has “proof from the most reliable sources—which [he has] checked on” (p. 119), implying that he is sure of his facts.
  - Stanley makes his contempt for Blanche clear in his conversation with Stella. He mocks Blanche, imitating her with the lines “‘Washing out some things?’” and



“Soaking in a hot tub” (p. 117), and referring to her sarcastically as “Her Majesty” (p. 118).

- Stanley’s resentment of Blanche, in particular of her superior attitude toward him, is apparent when he tells Stella that “[t]hat girl calls *me* common” (p. 118), suggesting that he feels insulted by such a label. When Stella reminds him that Blanche “grew up under very different circumstances than you did,” Stanley responds that he has “been told. And told and told and told” (p. 118). His words and his use of repetition indicate his frustration and irritation with constant reminders of Blanche and Stella’s cultured, upper-class upbringing.

**What effect does Williams create through his choices about how to introduce information about Blanche’s past on pages 119-123?**

- Student responses may include:
  - Williams’s choice to relate Blanche’s life in Laurel through Stanley’s perspective creates tension by highlighting and intensifying the conflict between Blanche and Stanley. Stanley tries to destroy Blanche’s reputation by repeating his colleague’s accusation. Stanley informs Stella that Blanche is “famous in Laurel” (p. 119) for her sexual behavior, including an affair with a “seventeen-year-old boy” (p. 122).
  - Williams chooses to have Blanche sing “It’s Only a Paper Moon” while Stanley tells her story to Stella behind her back, further creating tension in the play. Blanche’s singing reminds the audience of her presence and of her hopes, which Stanley destroys through the story that he tells Stella. Blanche sings “*blithely*” (p. 120) about a lover who will allow her to transform fantasy into reality, with the words “it wouldn’t be make-believe if you believed in me” (p. 120). Not only does Stanley tell Stella of his findings, he admits that he has also destroyed Blanche’s hopes of marriage by informing Mitch.
  - Williams’s choice to present information through Stanley, with Blanche singing in the background, creates uncertainty. Stanley’s obvious hostility toward Blanche, whom he describes as “washed up like poison” (p. 121), suggests that he is an unreliable source. However, Williams contrasts Stanley’s account with a song that refers to a “Barnum and Bailey world, Just as phony as it can be” (p. 120), implying that Blanche is no more reliable than Stanley and that neither character is necessarily trustworthy.
- **Differentiation Consideration:** If students struggle, consider posing the following scaffolding question:

**In Scene Seven, how does Williams choose to introduce information about Blanche’s life in Laurel?**

- Student responses may include:
  - Williams introduces information about Blanche’s life in Laurel from Stanley’s perspective. Stanley makes his hostility to Blanche clear as he recounts the story that Blanche is “no lily! Ha-ha! Some lily she is!” (p. 119) and that she is “as famous in Laurel as if she was the President of the United States, only she is not respected by any party!” (p. 119).
  - As Stanley tells his story about Blanche, Williams shows Blanche “*singing in the bathroom a saccharine popular ballad which is used contrapuntally with Stanley’s speech*” (p. 119).
  - Williams reveals the details of Blanche’s past gradually, as Stanley moves from vague hints to specific accusations. Stanley informs Stella of Blanche’s reputation in Laurel vaguely at first, before presenting increasingly specific details of her behavior as he exposes first “Lie Number One” (p. 119) about Blanche’s “squeamishness” (p. 119) and then “Lie Number Two” (p. 122) about her position at the high school in Laurel, when he informs Stella that Blanche was “kicked ... out of that high school” (p. 122) for engaging in an intimate relationship with a seventeen-year-old boy.
- **Differentiation Consideration:** Consider posing the following extension question to deepen students’ understanding:

**How does Williams’s use of the song “It’s Only a Paper Moon” develop a central idea?**

- Williams’s use of the song “It’s Only a Paper Moon” develops the central idea of identity by highlighting the fragility of Blanche’s identity and her dependence on others to sustain her version of her identity. The song is an appeal from one lover to another to transform fantasy into reality by believing in a “paper moon, Sailing over a cardboard sea” (p. 120). The singer of the song laments that without the love of his or her lover, the fantasy of the “paper moon” is “as phony as it can be” (p. 120), but suggests that “it wouldn’t be make-believe If you believed in me” (p. 120). By putting this song in Blanche’s mouth, even as Stanley seeks to tear down her idealized sense of self, Williams reminds the audience of Blanche’s vulnerability and desperate need for others to believe in her idealized identity.
- Remind students that Williams uses the word *degenerate* on page 124 as a homophobic slur. Students may use the author’s language when reading or citing textual evidence, but they should avoid using the word *degenerate* in discussion when they are not quoting from the text.

**How does Stanley justify sharing his information with Mitch? What does Stanley’s justification suggest about why he exposes Blanche?**

- Student responses may include:
  - Stanley justifies his actions by telling Stella that Mitch is his “best friend” (p. 126) and “a buddy of mine” (p. 125) who served in the army with Stanley and now works and bowls with him. Stanley’s emphasis on his friendship with Mitch suggests that Stanley is afraid that Blanche is a threat to his relationships with those around him.
  - Stanley’s justification suggests that his motivations lie in his hatred of Blanche. He refers to Mitch getting “caught” (p. 126) and compares marrying Blanche to “jump[ing] in a tank with a school of sharks” (p. 126), implying that Blanche is dangerous. Stanley remarks that Mitch is not “necessarily through with [Blanche]—just wised up” (p. 126), implying that Blanche is unworthy of respect, and that he shared his knowledge of her past with Mitch so that his friend would no longer love or respect Blanche enough to marry her.

**Analyze the power dynamics in Stanley’s conversation with Stella on pages 126-127.**

- Student responses may include:
  - Stanley’s conversation shows that he is determined to exert control over Blanche’s life. By buying Blanche a bus ticket back to Laurel to “make sure” (p. 127) she leaves, Stanley not only forces Blanche to leave but dictates the date and manner of her departure, telling Stella that Blanche is “not stayin’ here after Tuesday” (p. 127) and that she will “go on a bus and like it” (p. 127).
  - By informing Mitch of Blanche’s past, Stanley closes off the last of her options, emphasizing Blanche’s powerlessness and dependence on others. When Stella tells Stanley of her hopes that Mitch would marry Blanche, Stanley responds that “he’s not going to marry her” (p. 126). Stanley’s remark represents the end of Blanche’s hopes of a better life, and emphasizes that he now has information that gives him the power to control her future. As Stanley tells Stella, “[Blanche’s] future is mapped out for her” (p. 127).
  - Stanley asserts his power over Stella during the conversation on page 127. When Stella protests against sending Blanche away, Stanley tells Stella, “*She’ll go! Period. P.S. She’ll go Tuesday!*” (p. 127). Stanley allows Stella no say in the matter.

Lead a brief whole-class discussion of student responses.

Instruct student groups to read aloud Scene Eight (from “*Three-quarters of an hour later*” to “*supporting her with his arm, murmuring indistinguishably as they go outside*”) and answer the following questions before sharing out with the class.

Provide students with the definition of *amiability*.

- Students may be familiar with this word. Consider asking students to volunteer a definition before providing one to the group.
  - Students write the definition of *amiability* on their copies of the text or in a vocabulary journal.
- **Differentiation Consideration:** Consider providing students with the definitions of *beau* and *hoity-toity*.
  - Students write the definitions of *beau* and *hoity-toity* on their copies of the text or in a vocabulary journal.

**What do Stanley’s interactions with Blanche and Stella on pages 129-131 suggest about his character?**

- Student responses may include:
  - Stanley’s responses to Blanche demonstrate his contemptuous or unkind attitude toward her. Despite the uncomfortable situation, he barely acknowledges Blanche’s attempts to make conversation, refusing to tell a story on the grounds that he does not “know any refined enough for [Blanche’s] taste” (p. 129), and he does not respond to her joke, paying “*no attention to the story*” (p. 131).
  - Stanley’s interactions with Stella and Blanche reflect his dominant personality and desire to intimidate and control those around him. When Stella tells him to wash himself and clear the table, he tells her, “Don’t ever talk that way to me” and reminds her that he is “the king around here” (p. 131). Stanley’s outburst suggests that he believes that “‘Every Man is a King’” (p. 131), and he is determined to exercise power in his home.
  - Stanley’s aggressive reaction highlights the violent side of his character. According to the stage directions, Stanley “*seizes [Stella’s] arm*” and “*hurls a cup and saucer*” (p. 131), threatening further violence with the words, “You want me to clear your places?” (p. 131).
  - Stanley’s violent response to Stella hints at his insecurity. He tells Stella that “‘Pig—Polack—disgusting—vulgar—greasy!’—them kind of words have been on your tongue and your sister’s too much around here” (p. 131). Stanley’s words suggest that he resents and feels threatened by Blanche’s judgment of him. As a result, he reacts violently to Stella’s remarks that he is “making a pig of himself” and that his

face and fingers are “disgustingly greasy” (p. 131), fearing that his wife shares Blanche’s view of him.

**How does Stanley’s treatment of Blanche in Scene Eight develop one or more central ideas?**

- Student responses may include:
  - Stanley’s treatment of Blanche develops the central idea of power dynamics because it demonstrates that a shift in the power dynamics between the characters has occurred. Stanley, through the information that he has obtained, now has power over Blanche. He exercises that power by presenting her with a bus ticket, “[b]ack to Laurel! On the Greyhound! Tuesday!” (p. 136), causing her to lose control as she “*runs into the next room. She clutches her throat and then runs into the bathroom. Coughing, gagging sounds are heard*” (p. 136).
  - Stanley’s treatment of Blanche develops the central idea of identity, as Stanley feels uncertain of himself around Blanche and so feels the need to assert himself and his identity as a dominant American man throughout the scene. Stanley resents Blanche’s view of him as “Mr. Kowalski” (p. 130), the “healthy Polack” (p. 134) who uses “vulgar expressions” (p. 130). Stanley affirms to both Blanche and Stella that he is “the king around here” (p. 131) and “one hundred percent American, born and raised in the greatest country on earth and proud as hell of it” (p. 134). Stanley, threatened by Blanche’s “[h]oity-toity” (p. 138) attitude, reclaims his own sense of self by destroying Blanche’s idealized identity and sending her “[b]ack to Laurel” (p. 138).

**What do Stanley’s words to Stella on page 133 and pages 137-138 suggest about their relationship?**

- Student responses may include:
  - Stanley’s words to Stella on page 133 suggest that he is nostalgic for their previous relationship and for “[t]hem nights we had together” and feels that Blanche’s arrival has disrupted that relationship. Telling Stella “[i]t’s gonna be all right after she goes and after you’ve had the baby” (p. 133), Stanley implies that by sending Blanche away he is hoping to regain his former relationship with Stella, the way it was before Blanche arrived.
  - On page 137, Stanley again appeals to his and Stella’s shared memories, reminding her that when they first met, “[Stella] thought [Stanley] was common” (p. 137) but that he convinced her otherwise and took her away from her privileged life, “pull[ing] [her] down off them columns” and she “loved it” (p. 137). Stanley again blames Blanche for the loss of his idealized relationship with Stella, asking twice

“[a]nd wasn’t we happy together, wasn’t it all okay till she showed here?” (p. 137), suggesting once more that he is afraid that Blanche’s “[h]oity-toity” view of him as “an ape” (p. 138) has affected Stella and the bond that he shares with her.

- **Differentiation Consideration:** Consider posing the following extension question to deepen students’ understanding:

#### How does the onset of Stella’s labor advance the plot?

- The onset of Stella’s labor advances the plot by binding Stella more closely to Stanley and leaving Blanche more isolated. Earlier in the scene, Stanley expresses his belief that his relationship with Stella will return to normal “after [Blanche] goes and after [Stella has] had the baby” (p. 133). Now that Stanley has presented Blanche with the Greyhound ticket and his child is about to be born, Stanley has everything that he wished for and is in a position to reclaim Stella. As he and Stella leave for the hospital together, Stanley is “with [Stella] now, supporting her with his arm, murmuring indistinguishably as they go outside” (p. 138), leaving Blanche alone in the bathroom where she retreated earlier in the scene.

Lead a brief whole-class discussion of student responses.

### Activity 4: Quick Write

15%

Instruct students to respond briefly in writing to the following prompt:

#### Analyze Stanley’s motivations for his treatment of Blanche in Scenes Seven and Eight.

Instruct students to look at their annotations to find evidence. Ask students to use this lesson’s vocabulary wherever possible in their written responses.

- Students listen and read the Quick Write prompt.
- Display the prompt for students to see, or provide the prompt in hard copy.

Transition to the independent Quick Write.

- Students independently answer the prompt, using evidence from the text.
- See the High Performance Response at the beginning of this lesson.
- Consider using the Short Response Rubric to assess students’ writing. Students may use the Short Response Rubric and Checklist to guide their written responses.

### Activity 5: Closing

5%

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Display and distribute the homework assignment. For homework, instruct students to read Scene Nine of *A Streetcar Named Desire* (from “A while later that evening. Blanche is seated” to “The distant piano is slow and blue”) and annotate for character development (W.11-12.9.a).

Additionally, instruct students to review Scene Six of *A Streetcar Named Desire* (from “It is about two A.M. on the same evening” to “Sometimes—there’s God—so quickly!”) and respond briefly in writing to the following prompt:

**How has Mitch and Blanche’s relationship changed between Scene Six and Scene Nine?**

- Students follow along.

## Homework

Read Scene Nine of *A Streetcar Named Desire* (from “A while later that evening. Blanche is seated” to “The distant piano is slow and blue”) and annotate for character development.

Additionally, review Scene Six of *A Streetcar Named Desire* (from “It is about two A.M. on the same evening” to “Sometimes—there’s God—so quickly!”) and respond briefly in writing to the following prompt:

**How has Mitch and Blanche’s relationship changed between Scene Six and Scene Nine?**