# 12.4.1

# Lesson 1

### Introduction

In this first lesson of the unit and module, students begin their analysis of Tennessee Williams's play A Streetcar Named Desire. This lesson serves as an introduction to the module in which students explore how various authors develop the interrelated central ideas of identity, nostalgia, home, and power. Following A Streetcar Named Desire, students analyze Jimmy Santiago Baca's poem "A Daily Joy to Be Alive," Nikolai Gogol's short story "The Overcoat" from The Collected Tales of Nikolai Gogol, and Jhumpa Lahiri's novel The Namesake. These four texts engage students in analysis of how various characters struggle with their individual identity in relation to internal and external conflicts. Module 12.4 reinforces and refines many of the foundational skills, practices, and routines introduced in earlier modules. Accordingly, over the course of the module, students engage in independent textual analysis and discussion. Students also periodically engage with the different types of writing—narrative, argument, and informative—for homework and assessments.

In this lesson, students read Scene One of *A Streetcar Named Desire* as a whole class before analyzing the relationship between setting and character. Student learning is assessed via a Quick Write at the end of the lesson: Analyze one character's relationship to the setting in Scene One.

For homework, students read Scene Two of A Streetcar Named Desire and annotate for character development. Additionally, students respond briefly in writing to the following prompt: What do Blanche's actions and dialogue over the course of Scene One suggest about her character?





## **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.<br>11-12.9.a       | Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.  a. Apply grades 11-12 Reading standards 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"). |  |  |  |
| L.<br>11-12.4.a       | Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words and phrases based on <i>grades 11-12 reading and content</i> , choosing flexibly from a range of strategies.  a. Use context (e.g., the overall meaning of a sentence, paragraph, or text; a word's position or function in a sentence) as a clue to the meaning of a word or phrase.                     |  |  |  |

## **Assessment**

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#### Assessment(s)

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

Analyze one character's relationship to the setting in Scene One.

### High Performance Response(s)

A High Performance Response should:

Analyze the relationship between a character and the setting in Scene One (e.g., From the beginning of Scene One, Blanche seems out of place in the setting in which she finds herself. Williams describes Elysian Fields as "poor" (p. 3) and Blanche's "appearance is incongruous to this setting" (p. 5) because she is well-dressed and appears to be rich with her "necklace and earrings of pearl, white gloves and hat, looking as if she were arriving at a summer tea" (p. 5). When Blanche arrives, her "expression is one of shocked disbelief" (p. 5), because she does not believe her sister, Stella, would live here, suggesting that she and Stella were raised in a more upperclass setting. Stella demonstrates that she is far more comfortable than Blanche in Elysian Fields, as Stella responds to her sister's criticism by stating, "[a]ren't you being a little intense about it? It's not that bad at all!" (p. 12). This contrast between the sisters' perspectives of the setting serves to highlight how out of place Blanche is in Elysian Fields.).

## Vocabulary





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

- raffish (adj.) not completely acceptable or respectable but interesting and attractive
- attenuates (v.) to weaken or reduce in force, intensity, effect, quantity, or value
- redolences (n.) pleasant odors; fragrances
- cosmopolitan (adj.) free from local, provincial, or national ideas, prejudices, or attachments; at home all over the world
- valise (n.) a small piece of luggage that can be carried by hand, used to hold clothing, toilet articles, etc.
- vivacity (n.) liveliness; animation; sprightliness
- spasmodic (adj.) given to or characterized by bursts of excitement

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

incongruous (adj.) - out of keeping or place; inappropriate; unbecoming

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

- quaintly (adv.) -in a way that is old-fashioned or unusual quality or appearance that is usually attractive or appealing
- flats (n.) apartments typically on one floor
- gables (n.) a section of a building's outside wall that is shaped like a triangle and that is formed by two sections of the roof sloping down
- heterogeneous (adj.) made up of parts that are different
- intermingling (v.) mixing together
- dubiously (adv.) in a way that is unsure or uncertain
- highbrow (adj.) interested in serious art, literature, ideas, etc.
- reproach (v.) to speak in an angry and critical way to (someone); to express disapproval or disappointment to (someone)
- implicit (adj.) understood though not clearly or directly stated

## Lesson Agenda/Overview





| Student-Facing Agenda   | % of Lesson |
|---|-------------|
| Standards & Text:   |             |
| • Standards: RL.11-12.3, W.11-12.9.a, L.11-12.4.a                 |             |
| • Text: A Streetcar Named Desire by Tennessee Williams, Scene One |             |
| Learning Sequence:  |             |
| 1. Introduction of Lesson Agenda                                  | 1. 10%      |
| 2. Homework Accountability  | 2. 10%      |
| 3. Whole-Class Dramatic Reading and Discussion                    | 3. 60%      |
| 4. Quick Write  | 4. 15%      |
| 5. Closing  | 5. 5%       |

## **Materials**

Copies of the Short Response Rubric and Checklist for each student (optional)

# **Learning Sequence**

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

## **Activity 1: Introduction of Lesson Agenda**

10%



Begin by reviewing the goals for Module 12.4. In this module, students will read, discuss, and analyze four literary texts—a play, a poem, a short story, and a novel—focusing on how characters struggle with individual identity in relation to internal and external conflicts.

Additionally, inform students that throughout the module, there will be a gradual release into more independent textual analysis and discussion, as this module fosters students' independent learning in key text analysis lessons. Students will also periodically engage with different types of writing—narrative, argumentative, and expository—for homework and assessments.

Students listen.

Begin by reviewing the agenda and the assessed standard for this lesson: RL.11-12.3. In this lesson, students read and discuss Scene One from A Streetcar Named Desire, analyzing how setting and character interact throughout the scene.

Students look at the agenda.

### **Activity 2: Homework Accountability**

10%

Instruct students to take out their responses to the previous lesson's homework assignment. (Read Scene One of *A Streetcar Named Desire*. As you read, write down your initial reactions and questions about one character in the text.) Instruct students to form pairs and discuss their responses.

- Student responses may include:
  - Blanche's demeanor in this scene is nervous, and she is drinking more alcohol than she claims to drink. She has already had some liquor, but she lies and says, "I know you must have some liquor on the place! Where could it be, I wonder?" (p. 11).
  - What does Blanche mean when she says, "I want to be near you, got to be with somebody, I can't be alone!" (p. 17)? Why is she "not very well..." (p. 17)?
  - Why is Blanche so defensive about the loss of Belle Reve, arguing that Stella "just came home in time for the funerals" (p. 21)?
  - Blanche is much more nervous and soft-spoken when Stanley arrives at the house, and her dialogue reflects this change: "I—uh—" (p. 25).

Lead a brief whole-class discussion of student responses.





### Activity 3: Whole-Class Dramatic Reading and Discussion

60%

Transition to a whole-class dramatic reading. Assign students to read the roles of Stanley, Stella, Eunice, Colored Woman, Mitch, and Steve. Assign one more student to read the stage directions and setting descriptions. Instruct students to read Scene One aloud (from "The exterior of a two-story corner building on a street" to "[Her head falls on her arms.]").

- Williams uses the words Negro and colored to describe African Americans throughout the
  play. Students should use Williams's language when reading or citing textual evidence, but
  they should avoid using the words Negro and colored in discussion when they are not
  quoting from the play.
- Williams uses the word *Polack* repeatedly throughout the play to refer to people of Polish descent. Students should use Williams's language when reading or citing textual evidence, but they should avoid using the word *Polack* in discussion when they are not quoting from the play.
- Students will revisit the play's epigraph by Hart Crane later in the unit. Inform students that an *epigraph* is "a short quotation at the beginning of a book or chapter, intended to suggest the work's themes or central ideas."
- **Differentiation Consideration:** Throughout the unit, consider providing masterful readings of the text as necessary.
- Not all the stage directions (e.g. "[sincerely]" (p. 13)) must be read aloud, but rather can be interpreted while reading the dialogue.
- **Differentiation Consideration:** Consider posting or projecting the following guiding question to support students in their reading throughout this lesson:

What does the setting suggest about the characters in Scene One?

Instruct students to form pairs and 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).

• Consider dividing the text into smaller sections and interspersing students' dramatic reading with the appropriate questions from the sequence below.

Provide students with the definitions of *raffish*, *attenuates*, *redolences*, *cosmopolitan*, *valise*, *vivacity*, and *spasmodic*.

• 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 *raffish*, *attenuates*, *redolences*, *cosmopolitan*, *valise*, *vivacity*, and *spasmodic* on their copies of the text or in a vocabulary journal.
- **Differentiation Consideration**: Consider providing students with the definitions of quaintly, flats, gables, heterogeneous, intermingling, dubiously, highbrow, reproach, and implicit.
  - Students write the definitions of *quaintly*, *flats*, *gables*, *heterogeneous*, *intermingling*, *dubiously*, *highbrow*, *reproach*, and *implicit* on their copies of the text or in a vocabulary journal.

#### What effect does the color of the sky have on Elysian Fields?

• The sky, which is a "peculiarly tender blue," (p. 3) reduces, or "attenuates" (p. 3), the "atmosphere of decay" (p. 3). The effect of the sky makes a poor, decaying street more beautiful than it would be otherwise.

Explain to students that in the first paragraph of stage directions on page 3, Williams uses a literary device called an *allusion*, which is an indirect reference to a historical or literary figure, story, or event. In classical Greek mythology, Elysian Fields is the final resting place of the souls of the heroic and the virtuous.

How does Williams establish the setting of Elysian Fields? What relationship does Williams create between the setting of Elysian Fields and the people who live there?

- Student responses should include:
  - Williams establishes the setting through specific descriptions of the surroundings. The setting seems sultry, humid, and fragrant as it is characterized by "the warm breath of the brown river" (p. 3) and the smells of "bananas and coffee" (p. 3) during "an evening early in May" (p. 3) in "New Orleans" (p. 3). The setting also has a "raffish charm" (p. 3), and the "music of Negro entertainers at a barroom around the corner" (p. 3) and "tinny piano" (p. 3) further heightens the dingy, warm charm of the setting.
  - The piano "expresses the spirit of the life which goes on here" (p. 3). In other words, the music reflects the setting and people, suggesting that the people in this part of New Orleans must be "raffish" and "charm[ing]" (p. 3) like the setting. The "blue piano" (p. 3) also expresses "the spirit of … life" (p. 3) that includes "a relatively warm and easy intermingling of races" (p. 3).

#### How does Williams contrast the characters of Stella and Stanley on page 4?

• Williams describes Stella as "a gentle young woman ... and of a background obviously quite different from her husband's." Since Stanley appears to be "rough[]" and his



"blue denim work clothes" suggest that he is working-class, this description of Stella suggests that she comes from wealth or a higher social class than Stanley.

• **Differentiation Consideration**: If students struggle, consider posing the following scaffolding question:

What do Stanley's clothes suggest about his character (p. 4)?

• Stanley's clothes suggest he is tough and works hard in some type of manual labor because he is "roughly dressed in blue denim work clothes."

How does Williams's description of Blanche's physical appearance on page 5 relate to her reaction to Elysian Fields? Based on this context, what does the word *incongruous* mean? (L.11-12.4.a)

- Student responses should include:
  - Williams describes Blanche's appearance as "incongruous to this setting" (p. 5) because she is very well-dressed and obviously wealthy with her "necklace and earrings of pearl, white gloves and hat, looking as if she were arriving at a summer tea or cocktail party in the garden district" (p. 5) and so contrasts with the "poor" (p. 3) setting of Elysian Fields. Blanche's "incongruous" (p. 5) appearance explains her surprise and her "expression of shocked disbelief" (p. 5) when she finds herself in a neighborhood of "decay" (p. 3). Thus, Blanche is surprised to find herself in a neighborhood where she is so out of place.
  - The contrast between Blanche's refined appearance and the "poor" (p. 3) neighborhood where she finds herself suggests that the word *incongruous* means "out of harmony, inconsistent, or in contrast to."

How does Blanche convey her opinion of Elysian Fields to Stella (pp. 10-12)?

- Student responses may include:
  - Blanche does not approve of Elysian Fields as a suitable home for her sister. When Stella arrives, Blanche exclaims, "I thought you would never come back to this horrible place!" (p. 11). Blanche immediately claims that she "didn't mean to say that" (p. 11) as though she knows her previous comment was rude.
  - Blanche says she will be "honestly critical" (p. 12) about Elysian Fields, and compares the neighborhood to an Edgar Allan Poe poem. She claims "Only Poe! Only Mr. Edgar Allan Poe!—could do it justice!" (p. 12) implying that, like Poe's work, Elysian Fields is dark and grim.



- Blanche asks why Stella has not "told her ... that [she] had to live in these conditions!" (p. 12), implying that Elysian Fields is not a proper place to live.
- Consider explaining to students the meaning of Blanche's statement, "Only Poe! Only Mr. Edgar Allen Poe!—could do it justice! Out there I suppose is the ghoul-haunted woodland of Weir" (p. 12). Explain to students that Poe is a notoriously gothic writer, and that the "ghoul-haunted woodland of Weir" (p. 12) is a direct quote from Poe's poem, "Ulalume," in which the speaker visits his dead lover's grave. Explain to students that this reference, like Elysian Fields, is an *allusion*.

What does Stella's reaction to Blanche's opinion of Elysian Fields suggest about Stella's relationship to the place?

- Stella first pretends to not understand why Blanche disapproves: "Tell you what, Blanche?" (p. 12). She then responds to Blanche that, "It's not that bad at all!" (p. 12). These reactions suggest that Stella likes her life in Elysian Fields, even though she is "of a background obviously quite different from her husband's" (p. 4).
- **Differentiation Consideration:** Consider posing the following extension question to deepen students' understanding:

Why is Stella "embarrassed" (p. 15) when Blanche asks, "Two rooms, did you say?" (p. 15)?

• Stella is "embarrassed" because Blanche expected the house to be larger. Stella is embarrassed by the fact that she is living in such different conditions from the ones in which she and Blanche grew up.

What does the conversation between Stella and Blanche on pages 16-18 suggest about their respective characters?

• When Stella informs Blanche that Stanley is Polish, Blanche asks if Stanley's friends are all "Polacks" (p. 17), and Stella responds that Stanley's friends are "a mixed lot" (p. 17) or a diverse group of people. Stella warns Blanche that she should not "compare him with men that we went out with at home" (p. 17) because Stanley is a "different species" (p. 18). These comments suggest that Blanche and Stella had a different and less "mixed" (p. 17) upbringing than Stanley and his friends. However, while Stella has grown to accept Stanley's friends as "a mixed lot" (p. 17), she fears that Blanche "won't think they are lovely" (p. 17) or "highbrow" (p. 16) enough. Stella's anxiety suggests that while she is a tolerant and laid-back person who accepts her husband's friends, Blanche may be more proud and less likely to understand Stella's world.

What does Blanche's description of "the long parade to the graveyard" (p. 21) suggest about the impact of Belle Reve on Blanche's life?





- Student responses may include:
  - Blanche describes successive deaths of her family members that occurred at Belle Reve: "Father, mother! Margaret, that dreadful way! ... Funerals are quiet, but deaths—not always" (p. 21). These descriptions highlight how difficult it was for Blanche to deal with all the deaths and continue to maintain Belle Reve financially. Blanche tells Stella that the deaths created financial hardship and that is "how it slipped through my fingers!" (p. 22).
  - The descriptions highlight that Belle Reve's demise fell solely on Blanche's shoulders. Blanche emphasizes the fact that she and not Stella had to deal with the deaths and the money, saying, "I, I, I took the blows" (p. 21) and "Where were you!" (p. 22). Blanche blames Stella for not being around when Belle Reve was "[l]ost" (p. 21).
- Belle Reve is French for "beautiful dream." However, students who have previously studied French may recognize that Belle Reve is grammatically incorrect; the correct French for "beautiful dream" would be beau rêve.

How does the description of Stanley on pages 24-25 (from "[More laughter and shouts of parting" to "determining the way he smiles at them]") contrast with the description of Blanche on page 5? How does this description relate Stanley's character to the setting?

- Student responses should include:
  - Williams describes Stanley as having "[a]nimal joy" (p. 24); "the power and pride of a richly feathered male bird among hens" (p. 25); and an "appreciation of rough humor" (p. 25), suggesting that he is a vigorous and energetic man, who is not particularly refined. This description directly contrasts with what the audience knows of Blanche, whose "delicate beauty must avoid a strong light" (p. 5) and who has an "uncertain manner" (p. 5).
  - Stanley seems to embody the "spirit of the life which goes on" (p. 3) in Elysian Fields. Williams describes the setting as having a "raffish charm" (p. 3), which corresponds to descriptions of Stanley's "heartiness with men" (p. 25) and "siz[ing] women up at a glance" (p. 25). Stanley is less delicate and refined than Blanche, with "his appreciation of rough humor, his love of good drink and food and games" (p. 25) and so seems more at home in the rundown setting of Elysian Fields than Blanche.

How does the background music change at the end of Scene One? What impact does the shift in music have on the mood of the scene?

• Student responses should include:





- The music at the end of Scene One is "polka ... faint in the distance" (p. 28), whereas the music throughout the rest of the scene is "blue piano" (p. 3).
- The shift in music creates an anxious mood. The "blue piano" expresses the "raffish charm" of Elysian Fields and "expresses the spirit of the life which goes on here" (p. 3), suggesting an easygoing, relaxed mood. The polka music, however, coincides with Blanche discussing her past, specifically her previous marriage to "the boy [who] died" (p. 28), which consequently makes her "sick" (p. 28). By changing the music, Williams suggests the anxiety that the mention of Blanche's husband and his death triggers in her.
- **Differentiation Consideration:** If students struggle, consider posing the following scaffolding question:

What events does Blanche describe immediately after "the music of the polka rises up, faint in the distance" (p. 28)?

- As the polka begins to play, Blanche explains to Stanley that her young husband "died" (p. 28).
- If necessary, inform students that polka is dance music that has origins in Poland, as well as in many other Eastern European countries. Students will research the play's references to music for homework in 12.4.1 Lesson 6.

## **Activity 4: Quick Write**

15%

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

Analyze one character's relationship to the setting in Scene One.

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%

Display and distribute the homework assignment. For homework, instruct students to read Scene Two of A Streetcar Named Desire (from "It is six o'clock the following evening" to "[A tamale Vendor is heard calling.] VENDOR'S VOICE: Red-hot!") and annotate for character development (W.11-12.9.a). Also, based on this lesson's reading and analysis, instruct students to write a brief response to the following prompt:

What do Blanche's actions and dialogue over the course of Scene One suggest about her character?

- Students follow along.
- **Differentiation Consideration:** Students may begin reading *The Namesake* in this unit to prepare for Unit 12.4.2.

### Homework

Read Scene Two of A Streetcar Named Desire (from "It is six o'clock the following evening" to "[A tamale Vendor is heard calling.] VENDOR'S VOICE: Red-hot!") and annotate for character development. Also, based on this lesson's reading and analysis, write a brief response to the following prompt:

What do Blanche's actions and dialogue over the course of Scene One suggest about her character?





# **Short Response Rubric**

Assessed Standard:

|                                       | 2-Point Response  | 1-Point response   | 0-Point Response  |
|---------------------------------------|---|--|---|
| Inf<br>ere<br>nce<br>s/<br>Cla<br>ims | Includes valid inferences or claims from the text. Fully and directly responds to the prompt.   | Includes inferences or claims that are loosely based on the text.  Responds partially to the prompt or does not address all elements of the prompt.  | Does not address any of<br>the requirements of the<br>prompt or is totally<br>inaccurate. |
| An<br>aly<br>sis                      | Includes evidence of reflection and analysis of the text.   | A mostly literal recounting of events or details from the text(s).   | The response is blank.  |
| Evi<br>de<br>nce                      | Includes the most relevant<br>and sufficient textual<br>evidence, facts, or details<br>to develop a response<br>according to the<br>requirements of the Quick<br>Write. | Includes some relevant facts, definitions, concrete details and/or other information from the text(s) to develop an analysis of the text according to the requirements of the Quick Write. | The response includes no evidence from the text.  |
| Co<br>nve<br>nti<br>ons               | Uses complete sentences where errors do not impact readability.   | Includes incomplete sentences or bullets.  | The response is unintelligible or indecipherable.   |





# **Short Response Checklist**

Assessed Standard:

| Does my writing  | Did I   |  |
|--|---|--|
| Include valid inferences and/or claims from the text(s)?   | Closely read the prompt and address the whole prompt in my response?  |  |
|  | Clearly state a text-based claim I want the reader to consider?   |  |
|  | Confirm that my claim is directly supported by what I read in the text?   |  |
| Develop an analysis of the text(s)?                        | Consider the author's choices, impact of word choices, the text's central ideas, etc.?                              |  |
| Include evidence from the text(s)?                         | Directly quote or paraphrase evidence from the text?  |  |
|  | Arrange my evidence in an order that makes sense and supports my claim?   |  |
|  | Reflect on the text to ensure the evidence I used is the most relevant and sufficient evidence to support my claim? |  |
| Use complete sentences, correct punctuation, and spelling? | Reread my writing to ensure it means exactly what I want it to mean?  |  |
|  | Review my writing for correct grammar, spelling, and punctuation?   |  |



