

12.4.1 Lesson 7

Introduction

In this lesson, students read and analyze Scene Nine of *A Streetcar Named Desire* (from “A while later that evening. Blanche is seated” to “The distant piano is slow and blue”), in which Mitch arrives to confront Blanche and makes advances toward her before she forces him to leave. Students first engage in a whole-class discussion of the ways in which the relationship between Mitch and Blanche has changed between Scene Six and Scene Nine. Students then participate in a jigsaw discussion of how Blanche and Mitch attempt to exercise power in Scene Nine and the extent to which each is successful in doing so. Student learning is assessed via a Quick Write at the end of the lesson: Select either Mitch or Blanche. How does this character exercise power in Scene Nine and to what extent is he or she successful in doing so?

For homework, students respond briefly to the lesson’s Quick Write prompt, analyzing the character not discussed in the Quick Write. Also for homework, students read Scene Ten of *A Streetcar Named Desire* and annotate for the interaction between character development and central ideas.

Standards

Assessed Standard(s)	
RL.11-12.2	Determine two or more themes or central ideas of a text and analyze their development over the course of the text, including how they interact and build on one another to produce a complex account; provide an objective summary of the text.
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>
SL. 11-12.1.a, c	<p>Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners <i>on grades 11-12 topics, texts, and issues</i>, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.</p> <p>a. Come to discussions prepared, having read and researched material under study; explicitly draw on that preparation by referring to evidence from texts and other research on the topic or issue to stimulate a thoughtful, well-reasoned exchange of ideas.</p> <p>c. Propel conversations by posing and responding to questions that probe reasoning and evidence; ensure a hearing for a full range of positions on a topic or issue; clarify, verify, or challenge ideas and conclusions; and promote divergent and creative perspectives.</p>

Assessment

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.

- Select either Mitch or Blanche. How does this character exercise power in Scene Nine and to what extent is he or she successful in doing so?

High Performance Response(s)

A High Performance Response should:

- Analyze the ways in which Mitch exercises power in Scene Nine and the extent to which he is successful in doing so (e.g., Mitch attempts to exercise power in Scene Nine through verbal attacks and physical violence. He dismisses Blanche's image of sensitivity and refinement as "malarkey" (p. 145), telling her that she is "not clean enough to bring in the house with [his] mother" (p. 150). Mitch behaves aggressively throughout the scene. He "*pushes past [Blanche]*" (p. 140) to enter the flat and "*tears the paper lantern off the light bulb*" (p. 144). Finally he attempts to take "[w]hat [he has] been missing all summer" (p. 149) by force, "*fumbling to embrace [Blanche]*" (p. 149). In his aggression, both emotional and physical, Mitch recalls Stanley's violence and cruelty in Scene Eight; like Stanley, he tears apart Blanche's identity in the name of being "realistic" (p. 144), or telling what he considers to be the truth about Blanche. Mitch, however, is less successful than Stanley in exercising power. For example, he is not able to force Blanche into sexual activity, but rather finds himself bewildered and intimidated by her frantic reaction, and flees "[w]ith a startled gasp" (p. 150) as Blanche screams "Fire! Fire! Fire!" (p. 150).).

OR

- Analyze the ways in which Blanche exercises power in Scene Nine and the extent to which she is successful in doing so (e.g., Although Blanche is unable to reestablish her relationship with Mitch, she still reclaims and exercises power by attempting to expose Stanley's true motivations for accusing her. As she retells the story of her life in Laurel, Blanche shows Stanley to be a weak man who acts out of fear and insecurity, not the strong man he imagines himself to be. Comparing herself sarcastically to a tarantula, "a big spider" (p. 146), who makes men her "victims" (p. 146), Blanche exaggerates the image that Stanley has created of her in Scene Seven as a predator or "shark[]" (p. 126) in order to highlight his fear of her. In doing so, Blanche implies that Stanley's motivation in exposing her "pack of lies" (p. 118) is his own insecurity about the threat that she might pose to his identity and relationships. Blanche suggests that Stanley's attack on her character shows him to be a weak man who must bring others down in order to reassure himself of his own identity, like a child who has "tied an old tin can to the tail of the kite" (p. 147).).

Vocabulary

Vocabulary to provide directly (will not include extended instruction)

- uncavalier (adj.) - uncharacteristic of a gentleman
- fantastic (adj.) - imaginary; not based on reality
- recriminations (n.) - angry statements in which someone accuses or criticizes another person who has accused or criticized him or her
- legacies (n.) - anything handed down from the past

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

- None.

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

- uncouth (adj.) - not polite or socially acceptable
- malarkey (n.) - foolish words or ideas

Lesson Agenda/Overview

Student-Facing Agenda	% of Lesson
Standards & Text: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Standards: RL.11-12.2, RL.11-12.3, W.11-12.9.a, SL.11-12.1.a, c • Text: <i>A Streetcar Named Desire</i> by Tennessee Williams, Scene Nine 	
Learning Sequence: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Introduction of Lesson Agenda 2. Homework Accountability 3. Reading and Jigsaw Discussion 4. Quick Write 5. Closing 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 5% 2. 25% 3. 50% 4. 15% 5. 5%

Materials

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- 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.
	Bold text indicates questions for the teacher to ask students.
	<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%

Begin by reviewing the agenda and the assessed standards for this lesson: RL.11-12.2 and RL.11-12.3. In this lesson, students engage in evidence-based discussion about how Mitch and Blanche's relationship has changed between Scene Six and Scene Nine, before participating in a jigsaw discussion that focuses on the ways in which Mitch and Blanche exercise power in Scene Nine.

- Students look at the agenda.

Activity 2: Homework Accountability

25%

Instruct students to take out their responses to the first part of the previous lesson's homework assignment. (Read Scene Nine of *A Streetcar Named Desire* and annotate for character development.) Instruct students to form pairs and share their annotations.

- Student annotations may include:

- “Y’know, I really shouldn’t let you in after the treatment I have received from you this evening! So utterly uncavalier! But hello, beautiful!” (p. 139) - Blanche attempts to continue the relationship she had with Mitch previously by flirting with him even as she scolds him.
- “You’ve stopped that polka tune that I had caught in my head.” (p. 140) - Blanche is anxious, and is hearing the “Varsouviana,” which reminds her of the trauma of her husband’s suicide. Mitch’s appearance briefly soothes her.
- “I’ve never had a real good look at you, Blanche. Let’s turn the light on here.” (p. 144) - Mitch is suspicious of Blanche, and wants to see her clearly for the first time.
- “You’re not clean enough to bring in the house with my mother.” (p. 150) - Mitch shows his contempt for Blanche and for what he considers to be her lies about her sexual behavior. Mitch also shows himself to be cruel and judgmental like Stanley.
- “*Her throat is tightening with hysteria*” (p. 150) - Blanche begins to panic as she realizes that she has lost Mitch.

Lead a brief whole-class discussion of student responses.

Instruct students to take out their responses to the second part of the previous lesson’s homework assignment. (Additionally, review Scene Six of *A Streetcar Named Desire* and respond briefly in writing to the following prompt: How has Mitch and Blanche’s relationship changed between Scene Six and Scene Nine?). Instruct student pairs to discuss their responses.

- Student responses may include:
 - As a result of Stanley’s accusations, Mitch’s attitude toward Blanche has changed dramatically between Scenes Six and Nine. In Scene Six, Mitch is respectful of Blanche and even slightly intimidated by her. He asks permission to kiss her on page 102, and tells her that, “in all my—experience—I have never known anyone like you” (p. 103). In Scene Nine, however, Mitch looks at Blanche “*contemptuously*” (p. 142) and tells her that she is “not clean enough to bring in the house with [his] mother” (p. 150). Finally, he attempts to force her to accept his advances “*fumbling to embrace her*” on page 149, since he believes that her “old-fashioned” ideals are simply “malarkey” (p. 145). Now that Mitch believes that Blanche is not “clean” (p. 150), he no longer treats her with respect.

- Mitch's appearance reflects his change in attitude; whereas in Scene Six, Mitch is concerned about how he appears to Blanche, and reluctant to take off his coat because he is "ashamed of the way [he] perspire[s]" (p. 105). In Scene Nine, he arrives "*in work clothes... unshaven*" (p. 139), a state which Blanche describes as an "unforgiveable insult to a lady" (p. 140).
- In Scene Nine, it becomes clear that Blanche's state of mind has changed since Scene Six and that she is no longer in control of herself or the situation with Mitch. After the initial awkwardness of Scene Six, Blanche takes charge of the conversation between herself and Mitch. She flirts "*gaily*" (p. 108) but dictates the progress of the relationship, telling Mitch to "behave like a gentleman" (p. 108). Mitch accepts her control of the situation, telling her to "give [him] a slap whenever [he] step[s] out of bounds" (p. 108). From the beginning of Scene Nine, however, Blanche no longer has control of the situation or the relationship. She reacts "*frantically*" (p. 139) to Mitch's arrival. Then when he reacts coldly to her flirtation, she becomes anxious, "*clear[ing] her throat uneasily*" (p. 140) and rushing around to offer him a drink, "*pretending to search for the bottle*" (p. 141). As Blanche fends off Mitch's attempts to force her into sexual relations and obtain "[w]hat [he has] been missing all summer" (p. 149), she descends into "*hysteria*" (p. 150), screaming "Fire! Fire! Fire!" (p. 150), further demonstrating her loss of control in the relationship.
- Between Scene Six and Scene Nine, the basis of Mitch and Blanche's relationship shifts from fantasy to realism. In Scene Six, Blanche creates illusion, telling Mitch that the two of them are "going to pretend that [they] are sitting in a little artists' cafe [sic] on the Left Bank in Paris" (p. 104). In Scene Nine, Mitch rejects the illusion that Blanche seeks to create, insisting instead on being "realistic" (p. 144). The shift from fantasy to realism is apparent in Mitch's demand to turn the light on in order to have "a real good look" (p. 144) at Blanche. Whereas before, Mitch was content to "leave the lights off" (p. 103) and see Blanche by candlelight, he now wants to "take a look at [Blanche] good and plain" (p. 144), refusing to accept her idealized presentation of herself.
- Whereas Mitch previously had only heard Blanche's portrayal of herself as a sensitive and refined schoolteacher, he now has Stanley's harsh version of her as a promiscuous or immoral "town character" (p. 121). Stanley's accusations have created an alternative to Blanche's story, so that Mitch no longer sees Blanche through the identity she has presented to him, but through those of the "three men in a tub" who present such a "filthy" (p. 146) picture of her.

Lead a brief whole-class discussion of student responses.

Activity 3: Reading and Jigsaw Discussion

50%

Inform students that following a paired reading of Scene Nine, they will participate in a jigsaw discussion about the ways in which Mitch and Blanche exercise power in Scene Nine and the extent to which each is successful in doing so.

- Students listen.

Provide students with the definitions of *uncavalier*, *fantastic*, *recriminations*, and *legacies*.

- 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 *uncavalier*, *fantastic*, *recriminations*, and *legacies* on their copies of the text or in a vocabulary journal.
- **Differentiation Consideration:** Consider providing students with the definitions of *uncouth* and *malarkey*.
 - Students write the definitions of *uncouth* and *malarkey* on their copies of the text or in a vocabulary journal.
- Consider providing students with the following translation: "*Flores. Flores. Flores para los muertos. Flores. Flores*" (p. 147) means "Flowers. Flowers. Flowers for the dead. Flowers. Flowers" in Spanish.
- Consider providing students with the following translation: "*Corones para los muertos. Corones...*" (p. 148) means "Crowns for the dead. Crowns..." in Spanish.
- **Differentiation Consideration:** Consider posting or projecting the following guiding questions to support students throughout this lesson:

Which character has more power in Scene Nine? How does that character use power?

Instruct students to form pairs. Instruct each student in the pair to take the role of either Blanche or Mitch and read Scene Nine (from "A while later that evening. Blanche is seated" to "The distant piano is slow and blue").

- Students form pairs and read Scene Nine.

Post or project the following focus questions:

Focus Question 1: How does Mitch exercise power in Scene Nine?

Focus Question 2: To what extent is Mitch successful in exercising power in Scene Nine?

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Focus Question 3: How does Blanche exercise power in Scene Nine?**Focus Question 4: To what extent is Blanche successful in exercising power in Scene Nine?**

Assign half of the student pairs to respond to Focus Questions 1 and 2, and the other half to respond to Focus Questions 3 and 4. Instruct students to review the excerpt and respond to their focus questions, drawing on evidence from throughout the scene in their responses.

- Students work in pairs to answer their assigned focus questions.

Once student pairs have answered their focus questions, instruct each pair to split up and form a new pair with another student who answered different focus questions. Instruct students to share and discuss their responses in their new pairs.

- Student pairs engage in a discussion about Focus Questions 1-4.
- The new pairs should be composed of one student who answered Focus Questions 1 and 2 and a second student who answered Focus Questions 3 and 4.
- Consider reminding students of their previous work with SL.11-12.1.a, which requires that students come to class having read the material and asks them to explicitly draw on evidence from the text to support their discussion.
- Consider reminding students of their previous work with SL.11-12.1.c, which requires that students pose and respond to questions and qualify or justify their own points of agreement and disagreement with other students.
- See below for possible student responses.

Focus Question 1: How does Mitch exercise power in Scene Nine?

- Student responses may include:
 - Mitch attempts to exercise power over Blanche by using the information that he has learned from Stanley to challenge and destroy the refined image Blanche has presented of herself. Mitch complains bitterly of Blanche's "malarkey" (p. 145), accusing her of not being "straight" (p. 145) with him, telling her, "[y]ou lied to me, Blanche" (p. 147). Although he continues to make sexual advances toward her, he tells her that he will not marry her because she is "not clean enough to bring in the house with [his] mother" (p. 150). Just as Stanley has done in the previous scene, Mitch strips Blanche of her identity as a sensitive, refined schoolteacher, forcing her to present what he calls a "realistic" (p. 144) view of herself by turning on the light in spite of her pleading.
 - Mitch combines emotional violence with the threat of physical violence through his aggressive behavior throughout the scene. As he enters the apartment, he "pushes

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past” Blanche (p. 140) and “*tears the paper lantern off the light bulb,*” scaring Blanche into “*a frightened gasp*” (p. 144). At the end of the scene, he tries to force Blanche to submit to his sexual advances and give him “[w]hat [he has] been missing all summer” (p. 149) as he “*fumbl[es] to embrace her*” (p. 149). The aggression that Mitch shows in his exercise of power again resembles Stanley’s actions in Scene Eight, when Stanley uses his violent outburst at the dinner table to intimidate both Blanche and Stella.

Focus Question 2: To what extent is Mitch successful in exercising power in Scene Nine?

- Student responses may include:
 - Mitch succeeds in exercising power over Blanche by forcing her to admit that she “misrepresent[s] things” and does not “tell truth,” but rather “what *ought* to be truth” (p. 145). In doing so, he pushes her into a breakdown as she begins to ramble “*as if to herself*” (p. 148) to the point that “*her throat is tightening with hysteria*” (p. 150) and she begins to scream.
 - Mitch successfully exercises power over Blanche by tearing apart her idealized image of herself and destroying her fantasy of a happy life with him. By forcing her to turn the light on so that he can be “realistic” (p. 144) and telling her that she is “not clean” (p. 150), Mitch denies Blanche’s identity as a “lady” (p. 140). Finally, Mitch takes away Blanche’s dream of marriage by telling her, “I don’t think I want to marry you any more” (p. 150), putting an end to Blanche’s hopes for a better future.
 - Mitch is unsuccessful in his attempts to exercise power over Blanche. Although he attempts to force her into sexual activity, to get “[w]hat [he has] been missing all summer” (p. 149), he is unable to do so. Blanche’s hysterical reaction bewilders and frightens him into fleeing “*[w]ith a startled gasp*” (p. 150).
- **Differentiation Consideration:** If students would benefit from a more structured analysis, consider providing the following scaffolding questions to support their reading and discussion:

What is Mitch’s purpose in confronting Blanche? To what extent does he achieve that purpose?

How is Mitch’s treatment of Blanche similar to or different from Stanley’s treatment of her in Scene Eight?

Focus Question 3: How does Blanche exercise power in Scene Nine?

- Student responses may include:

- Blanche initially attempts to exercise power in the same way that she did in Scene Six, through flirtation and civilized behavior. Her first reaction to Mitch's arrival is to restore her glamorous appearance, "*crouching at the mirror and dabbing her face with cologne and powder*" (p. 139), as she scolds him for his "uncavalier" behavior (p. 139) but "*offers him her lips*" (p. 140). Even as he responds coldly and aggressively to her flirtation, she continues to "pretend [she does not] notice anything different" (p. 141) about his behavior, calling him "honey" (p. 140), turning off the fan, and offering him a drink.
- Blanche exercises power in this scene because while Mitch uses Stanley's information to tear apart her identity, her confession of her "intimacies" (p. 146) attacks the credibility of the men who accuse her. Blanche confirms the facts of the story that Stanley has told about her but does so in a way that shows her accusers to be mean-spirited and insecure, rather than the powerful men that they imagine themselves to be. By describing Stanley, Kiefaber, and Shaw, as "three men in a tub! And such a filthy tub!" (p. 146), Blanche reduces the men who seek to exercise power over her to petty, dirty men who have no higher motivation than to bring her down or "tie[] an old tin can to the tail of the kite" (p. 147). In her description of "The Tarantula Arms" (p. 146), Blanche actively mocks or makes fun of the men who see her as a "a big spider" (p. 146), emphasizing their fear of her through an image that echoes Stanley's description of her as a predatory "school of sharks" (p. 126) in Scene Seven. In this way, Blanche exercises power not by defending herself against Stanley's accusations but by attacking the self-image of the men who have made the accusations and tearing apart their identity as they have hers.
- Blanche exercises power through her "*hysteria*" (p. 150) at the end of Scene Nine. Her screams of "Fire! Fire! Fire" (p. 150) are a way to protect herself by forcing Mitch to leave.

Focus Question 4: To what extent is Blanche successful in exercising power in Scene Nine?

- Student responses may include:
 - Blanche's attempts to regain power by continuing to present her refined and cultured image fail in this scene. Mitch chooses to believe the accounts of Stanley, Kiefaber, and Shaw over Blanche's version, telling her that she has offered only "[l]ies, lies, inside and out, all lies" (p. 147).
 - Just as Stanley exercises power over Blanche by destroying her identity, Blanche exercises power by tearing apart his self-image as a powerful man, even as she admits to the factual truth of his accusations. Whereas in Scenes Seven and Eight, Stanley boasts of having "th' dope" (p. 118) on Blanche and of being "the king

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around here” (p. 131), Blanche’s story of her life in Laurel in Scene Nine suggests that Stanley and his co-accusers are no more powerful than children who “tie[] an old tin can to the tail of the kite” (p. 147), and that they act against her out of fear. Her wild and sarcastic account of her life at the Hotel Flamingo, or “Tarantula Arms” (p. 146), where she tells Mitch she “brought [her] victims” (p. 146), exaggerates and mocks the story told by Stanley in order to highlight his fear and insecurity. By describing herself as a “big spider” (p. 146), Blanche echoes Stanley’s depiction of her as a predator, “a school of sharks” (p. 126). As she repeats and exaggerates his image of her as a frightening and dangerous creature, she suggests that his motivation for destroying her image lies in his fear of her, and of the threat that she might pose to his identity and his relationships. In this way, Blanche regains a kind of power in Scene Nine because she succeeds in showing the weakness and insecurity of the man who has destroyed her identity and her relationship with Mitch.

- Blanche’s increasing “*hysteria*” (p. 150) over the course of the scene, although it appears to be a loss of control, also enables her to exercise power by intimidating Mitch. Blanche is unable to exercise power when she tells Mitch to “marry [her]” (p. 150), since he is no longer willing to show her respect; however, her apparent breakdown frightens and confuses him. As Blanche screams “Fire! Fire! Fire!” (p. 150) Mitch finds himself “*startled*” (p. 150) and bewildered, and eventually runs away. In this way, Blanche successfully exercises a limited form of power since she is able to protect herself from his aggressive advances.
- Blanche’s intimidation of Mitch represents a partial victory and does not represent a successful exercise of power. Blanche no longer has Mitch’s respect and can do no more than protect herself from physical attack. Mitch’s departure puts an end to his relationship with Blanche, leaving her isolated and vulnerable as she “*staggers back from the window and falls to her knees*” (p. 150). The scene ends with this image of Blanche, alone and seemingly defeated, as the piano becomes “*slow and blue*” (p. 150), suggesting her despair and lack of success in exercising power. Blanche is therefore not successful in exercising power because she is unable to restore her identity or reestablish her relationship with Mitch, resulting in the destruction of her hopes for the future.
- **Differentiation Consideration:** If students would benefit from a more structured analysis, consider providing the following scaffolding questions to support their reading and discussion:

What do the opening stage directions in Scene Nine suggest about Blanche’s state of mind?

What is Blanche’s purpose in her interactions with Mitch at the start of the scene? How does this purpose change over the course of the scene?

How is Blanche’s account of her life in Laurel similar to or different from that of “Kiefaber, Stanley and Shaw” (p. 147)?

What does Blanche mean when she says, “Kiefaber, Stanley and Shaw have tied an old tin can to the tail of the kite” (p. 147)?

How is Blanche’s “*hysteria*” (p. 150) at the end of Scene Nine similar to or different from her behavior in the play up to this point?

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:

Select either Mitch or Blanche. How does this character exercise power in Scene Nine and to what extent is he or she successful in doing so?

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 analyze the character not discussed in this lesson’s Quick Write, responding briefly to the same Quick Write prompt:

Select either Mitch or Blanche. How does this character exercise power in Scene Nine and to what extent is he or she successful in doing so?

Also for homework, instruct students to read Scene Ten of *A Streetcar Named Desire* (from “*It is a few hours later that night*” to “*The hot trumpet and drums from the Four Deuces sound loudly*”) and annotate for the interaction between character development and central ideas (W.11-12.9.a).

Homework

Analyze the character not discussed in this lesson’s Quick Write, responding briefly to the same Quick Write prompt:

Select either Mitch or Blanche. How does this character exercise power in Scene Nine and to what extent is he or she successful in doing so?

Also for homework, read Scene Ten of *A Streetcar Named Desire* (from “*It is a few hours later that night*” to “*The hot trumpet and drums from the Four Deuces sound loudly*”) and annotate for the interaction between character development and central ideas.