

## 12.4.1

## Lesson 9

## Introduction

In this lesson, students read and analyze Scene Eleven of *A Streetcar Named Desire* (from “*It is some weeks later. Stella is packing Blanche’s things*” to “*This game is seven-card stud*”), in which Stella and Stanley have arranged for Blanche to be sent to a state psychiatric institution. Students work in small groups to answer four guiding discussion questions about the excerpt, focusing on character development and Williams’s choices about how to end the play. Student learning is assessed via a Quick Write at the end of the lesson: Choose either Stanley or Stella. To what extent does Williams provide a resolution for this character?

For homework, students review *A Streetcar Named Desire*, their notes, annotations, and previous Quick Writes in preparation for the next lesson’s discussion about the following prompt: What characters or forces contribute to Blanche’s situation in Scene Eleven?

## 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).
RL.11-12.5	Analyze how an author's choices concerning how to structure specific parts of a text (e.g., the choice of where to begin or end a story, the choice to provide a comedic or tragic resolution) contribute to its overall structure and meaning as well as its aesthetic impact.
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 on <i>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

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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.

- Choose either Stanley or Stella. To what extent does Williams provide a resolution for this character?

### High Performance Response(s)

A High Performance Response should:

- Discuss the extent to which Williams provides a resolution for Stanley (e.g., At the beginning of Scene Eleven, Stanley appears confident that he has succeeded in eliminating Blanche from his life without suffering any consequences for his assault on her. Stanley is “*prodigiously elated*” while discussing his luck at poker, explaining his theory that “[l]uck is believing you’re lucky” (p. 163), which suggests that he believes that events have resolved themselves in his favor. However, the end of the play suggests a shift in his relationship with Stella. As soon as Blanche leaves, Stella gives herself over to a “*complete surrender to crying*” (p. 179). During Stella’s “sobs,” Stanley tries to reclaim his physical bond with her, murmuring to his wife “*voluptuously*” in a “*sensual murmur*” as “*his fingers find the opening of her blouse*” (p. 179), but Stella is unresponsive to his advances. Stanley then addresses Stella “*a bit uncertainly*” (p. 179), as if he is no longer sure of his relationship with her, demonstrating that he has not actually found resolution with Blanche’s departure.).

OR

- Discuss the extent to which Williams provides a resolution for Stella (e.g., Stella’s decision to arrange for Blanche to leave for a state psychiatric institution in Scene Eleven appears to reflect her decision to remain with her husband and “believe” (p. 165) Stanley’s story over Blanche’s. However, her conversation with Eunice shows that she has doubts. Stella wonders if she is “[doing] the right thing” (p. 165). Stella’s explanation to Eunice that “I couldn’t believe [Blanche’s] story and go on living with Stanley” (p. 165) implies that she has chosen to believe him because to do otherwise would force her to admit that Stanley raped Blanche and to leave him, even though she has a child with him. As Blanche leaves, Stella sobs, “What have I done to my sister?” (p. 176) and breaks down in a “*complete surrender to crying*” (p. 179), barely aware of Stanley’s advances. In this way, Williams suggests that despite her decision to remain with Stanley, Stella remains troubled by doubts. Thus, her relationship with Stanley has changed in a negative way, as she is unable to completely trust her husband.).

## Vocabulary

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

- prodigiously (adv.) - extraordinarily
- elated (adj.) - very happy or proud; in high spirits
- callous (adj.) - insensitive; indifferent
- gravity (n.) - serious or dignified behavior; dignity; solemnity
- aura (n.) - a special quality or feeling that seems to come from a person, place, or thing
- colloquy (n.) - a conversational exchange; dialogue
- *sotto voce* (adv.) - in a very quiet voice
- divested (adj.) - stripped or deprived
- reverberated (v.) - echoed or resounded
- pinions (v.) - disables or restrains by binding the arms
- voluptuously (adv.) - in such a way as to give pleasure to the senses

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

None.

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

- rat-race (n.) - the unpleasant life of people who have jobs that require them to work very hard in order to compete with others for money, power, status, etc.
- perplexity (n.) - the state of being very confused
- detachment (n.) - lack of emotion or of personal interest
- sinister (adj.) - having an evil appearance

## Lesson Agenda/Overview

File: 12.4.1 Lesson 9 Date: 6/30/15 Classroom Use: Starting 9/2015

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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, RL.11-12.5, W.11-12.9.a, SL.11-12.1.a, c</li> <li>Text: <i>A Streetcar Named Desire</i> by Tennessee Williams, Scene Eleven</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. Whole-Class Dramatic Reading</li> <li>4. Small-Group Discussion</li> <li>5. Quick Write</li> <li>6. Closing</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. 5%</li> <li>2. 10%</li> <li>3. 20%</li> <li>4. 45%</li> <li>5. 15%</li> <li>6. 5%</li> </ol>

## Materials

- Student copies of the 12.4 Speaking and Listening Rubric and Checklist (refer to 12.4.1 Lesson 3)
- 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%

Begin by reviewing the agenda and assessed standards for this lesson: RL.11-12.3 and RL.11-12.5. In this lesson, students analyze Scene Eleven of *A Streetcar Named Desire* by discussing a series of prompts focused on character development and Williams's choices about how to end the play.

- 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 and annotate Scene Eleven of *A Streetcar Named Desire*.) Instruct students to form pairs and share their annotations.

- Student annotations will vary.

Lead a brief whole-class discussion of student responses.

### Activity 3: Whole-Class Dramatic Reading

20%

Provide students with the definitions of *prodigiously*, *elated*, *callous*, *gravity*, *aura*, *colloquy*, *sotto voce*, *divested*, *reverberated*, *pinions*, and *voluptuously*.

- 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 *prodigiously*, *elated*, *callous*, *gravity*, *aura*, *colloquy*, *sotto voce*, *divested*, *reverberated*, *pinions*, and *voluptuously* on their copies of the text or in a vocabulary journal.
- **Differentiation Consideration:** Consider providing students with the definitions of *rat-race*, *perplexity*, *detachment*, and *sinister*.
  - Students write the definitions of *rat-race*, *perplexity*, *detachment*, and *sinister* on their copies of the text or in a vocabulary journal.

Transition to a whole-class dramatic reading. Assign students to read the roles of Stanley, Pablo, Mitch, Eunice, Stella, Blanche, Matron, Doctor, and Steve. Assign one student to read the stage directions and setting descriptions. Instruct students to read Scene Eleven aloud (from “*It is some weeks later. Stella is packing Blanche’s things*” to “*This game is seven-card stud*”).

- Assigned students read aloud as the others follow along, reading silently.
- **Differentiation Consideration:** Consider posting or projecting the following guiding question to support students throughout this lesson:

How have the characters changed at the end of the play?

## Activity 4: Small-Group Discussion

45%

Instruct students to form small groups. Explain to students that this discussion focuses on Scene Eleven and is structured with four main discussion prompts. In small groups, students discuss each question in depth, presenting a variety of text evidence and analysis. Remind students to listen to diverse perspectives, respond to their peers’ observations, and consider the possibility of multiple responses. Instruct students to use the relevant portions of the 12.4 Speaking and Listening Rubric and Checklist to guide their discussion.

- The structure of this lesson is meant to increase student independence in text analysis by scaffolding their understanding through collaborative discussion.
- 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.

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- 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.
- Consider providing students with the following translation: “Maldita sea tu suerte” (p. 163) means “a curse on your luck.” Inform students that “suerto” may mean “suerte” or “luck.”

Post or project each set of questions below for students to discuss. Instruct students to continue to annotate the text as they read and discuss (W.11-12.9.a).

### How does Williams convey Blanche’s state of mind in Scene Eleven?

- Student responses may include:
  - Williams shows how Blanche has created an idealized view of herself and her life following Stanley’s assault. Stella has told Blanche that arrangements have been made for Blanche “to rest in the country,” but Blanche, according to Stella, “has got it mixed in her mind with Shep Huntleigh” (p. 165). When Blanche appears, she behaves as if traveling with Shep Huntleigh is a reality, giving Stella instructions about her clothing (p. 165) and “*accepting the compliment*” (p. 167) that Eunice gives her about her hair. Blanche’s state of mind reflects her idealized hopes for her life, which Stanley has denied her in the “trap” (p. 169) of the apartment.
  - Blanche appears to be in a sad and thoughtful mood as she reflects on her idealized future. She tells Stella and Eunice that she will “die on the sea” (p. 170). Rather than seeing a happy life for herself, Blanche imagines how she will die “with [her] hand in the hand of some nice-looking ship’s doctor” and compares the sea into which her body will be thrown to the blue of “[her] first lover’s eyes” (p. 170). Blanche’s reflections and her reference to her dead husband show that she no longer foresees a happy life, but only death.
  - Blanche’s responses to other people show that her state of mind and her identity remain fragile, and that she is afraid of Stanley in particular. The sound of Stanley’s voice “*shocks*” Blanche into a “*sudden hysteria*” (p. 167), reminding her of his presence and of her situation and thus conflicting with her idealized view of her life. Blanche begins to panic when she sees that the doctor is “not the gentleman [she] was expecting” (p. 173), and her terror grows when she is confronted by Stanley, first as she “*rushes past him*” (p. 174) and then as he offers her the paper lantern, causing her to “*cr[y] out as if the lantern was herself*” (p. 176).
  - Williams conveys Blanche’s unease and the trauma that she has experienced through the use of the “*Varsouviana*” which “*rises audibly*” (p. 166) as Blanche

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emerges from the bathroom and *"faintly plays"* (p. 171) as the doorbell rings. Finally, as Stanley confronts Blanche on page 174, the *"Varsouviana"* plays again, *"filtered into a weird distortion, accompanied by the cries and noises of the jungle"* (p. 174).

- Williams uses the *"[l]urid reflections [which] appear on the walls in odd, sinuous shapes"* (p. 174) along with *"inhuman cries and noises"* (p. 177) to convey Blanche's fear and her sense of being under constant threat of physical or emotional attack. The reflections and noises appear as Stanley confronts Blanche, asking, "Did you forget something?" (p. 174), right before *"[t]he Matron advances on one side, Stanley on the other"* (p. 175), trapping Blanche.
- Blanche's reaction to the doctor's approach on page 177 demonstrates her need for kindness and acceptance. As the doctor removes his hat, his *"unhuman quality goes,"* and his *"gentle and reassuring"* voice and politeness in addressing Blanche as "Miss DuBois" ease Blanche's fears so that *"[t]he lurid reflections fade from the walls, the inhuman cries and noises die out and her own hoarse crying is calmed"* (p. 177). The doctor treats Blanche as she hopes and expects to be treated, as a refined lady, and so she responds calmly, allowing him to lead her away *"as if she were blind"* (p. 178).

### What does Stanley's behavior in Scene Eleven suggest about his character?

- Student responses may include:
  - Stanley's behavior in Scene Eleven demonstrates his confidence. At the start of Scene Eleven, the stage directions describe him as *"prodigiously elated"* over his luck at poker as he discusses his theory that *"[l]uck is believing you're lucky"* (p. 163). Although Stanley is speaking in general terms, his remarks suggest that he believes that if he trusts in his luck, he will face no consequences for his assault on Blanche.
  - Stanley's behavior in Scene Eleven reflects his dominant personality and determination to exercise power over those around him. Stanley bullies Mitch throughout the poker game, ignoring Mitch's resentment and feelings of guilt. As Mitch loses focus on the game at the sound of Blanche's voice, Stanley *"slaps him on the shoulder"* and tells him to "come to" (p. 167). Stanley also continues to behave aggressively in order to intimidate Blanche. For example, when Blanche's voice disturbs his poker game, *"Stanley shoves back his chair as if about to rise"* (p. 168) and Steve has to restrain him. Later, as Blanche retreats from the Doctor and Matron into the apartment, he *"suddenly pushes back his chair and rises as if to block her way"* (p. 174). His final act of intimidation is to tear down

the paper lantern, causing Blanche to “*cr[y] out as if the lantern was herself*” (p. 176).

- Stanley shows himself to be “callous” (p. 164) and without guilt for his actions. As Blanche is preparing to leave, he plays poker with his friends, and responds to Eunice’s suggestion that he and his friends are “[m]aking pigs of [them]selves” by asking, “What’s the matter with her?” (p. 164). Following Blanche’s departure, Stanley attempts to comfort a sobbing Stella by making advances toward her as “*his fingers find the opening of her blouse*” (p. 179), showing his lack of concern for the suffering he has caused her.

### How does Blanche’s “story” (p. 165) impact Stanley’s relationship with Stella?

- Student responses may include:
  - Stanley attempts to return immediately to the relationship that he and Stella shared before Blanche’s arrival. Stanley tells Stella in Scene Eight that when Blanche leaves “[i]t’s gonna be all right again between you and me the way that it was” (p. 133), and he immediately tries to reclaim his physical bond with Stella in Scene Eleven. As soon as Blanche is out of sight, Stanley begins to murmur to his wife “*voluptuously*” in a “*sensual murmur*” as “*his fingers find the opening of her blouse*” (p. 179), suggesting that he expects or at least hopes that their relationship has not changed.
  - Although Stanley hopes that Blanche’s departure will restore his relationship with Stella, he remains hesitant, suggesting that he is not completely sure of himself with her as he addresses her “*a bit uncertainly*” (p. 179).
  - Stella’s words and behavior in Scene Eleven suggest that her relationship with Stanley has changed for the worse. Stella expresses her doubts to Eunice, wondering whether she “did the right thing” (p. 165) in sending Blanche away to the psychiatric institution. Stella’s explanation for her decision, that she “couldn’t believe her story and go on living with Stanley” (p. 165) is unclear. Stella does not say that she believes Blanche’s story to be a lie, but rather suggests that to believe it would force her to leave Stanley. In this way, Stella implies that she has chosen to believe and stay with Stanley because the alternative is too difficult to accept.
  - Stella appears unresponsive to Stanley’s advances as Blanche leaves. As her sister leaves, Stella seems to take comfort not in Stanley but in a “*complete surrender to crying*” which has “*something luxurious*” (p. 179) about it, as though she has given herself over completely to her guilt and grief, which have overwhelmed any feelings she might have for Stanley.

How does Williams's reference to "*the disastrous poker night*" (p. 163) from Scene Three relate to the events in Scene Eleven?

- Student responses may include:
  - By drawing a parallel between the poker games in Scenes Three and Eleven, Williams emphasizes how little has changed for Stanley and his friends. Stanley and his friends play their poker game as if unaware that Blanche is leaving for a psychiatric institution, prompting Eunice to label them as "callous things with no feelings" (p. 164). At the end of the scene, Stanley attempts to make advances to Stella while Steve resumes the poker game with the words: "This game is seven-card stud" (p. 179). The parallels between the two scenes suggest that the men simply pick up where they left off earlier in the play, unaffected by the events in between, highlighting the cruelty and injustice of Blanche's rape by Stanley, which goes unpunished, and her departure for psychiatric care.
  - The parallel between the two scenes emphasizes the contrast between Blanche's earlier hopes and her current situation, as Stella refuses to believe her "story" (p. 165) about Stanley's rape of her and instead arranges for her to leave for a psychiatric institution. In Scene Three, Blanche, despite the violence of the scene, finds hope in the "kindness" (p. 69) shown to her by Mitch. By Scene Eleven, Stanley's emotional and physical assault on Blanche has left her alone and destroyed her relationship with Mitch. Thus, she finds herself dependent once more on "the kindness of strangers" (p. 178) as she leaves with the doctor for the psychiatric institution.
  - Although Stanley seems to have been successful in destroying Blanche and removing her from his life, the parallels between the settings of Scene Three and Scene Eleven also draw attention to the changes in Stanley's relationship with his wife, Stella, and his friend, Mitch. As the Doctor and Matron enter the flat, grief overcomes Stella and she seems to doubt her decision to believe Stanley over Blanche, sobbing, "What have I done to my sister?" (p. 176). Stella's "*luxurious sobbing*" (p. 179) after Blanche leaves and her lack of response to Stanley's advances at the end of Scene Eleven contrast with the speed with which she forgives his violence in Scene Three. After Stanley's violence in Scene Three, the two "*come together with low, animal moans*" (p. 67), but in Scene Eleven Stella does not respond to Stanley's advances, suggesting that the bond between them has been weakened. Likewise, Stanley's actions have destroyed his friendship with Mitch who clearly feels remorse over Blanche's situation and "*collapses at the table, sobbing*" (p. 177) as the Matron seizes Blanche in the bedroom. As Stanley prevents Mitch from going to help Blanche, Mitch "*lunges and strikes at Stanley*" (p. 177), suggesting that Mitch blames Stanley for what has happened to Blanche.

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Lead a brief whole-class discussion of student responses.

### Activity 5: Quick Write

**15%**

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

**Choose either Stanley or Stella. To what extent does Williams provide a resolution for this character?**

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 6: Closing

**5%**

Display and distribute the homework assignment. For homework, instruct students to review *A Streetcar Named Desire*, their notes, annotations, and previous Quick Writes in preparation for the next lesson's discussion about the following prompt:

**What characters or forces contribute to Blanche's situation in Scene Eleven?**

- Students follow along.

## Homework

Review *A Streetcar Named Desire*, your notes, annotations, and previous Quick Writes in preparation for the next lesson's discussion about the following prompt:

**What characters or forces contribute to Blanche's situation in Scene Eleven?**