

The Glass Menagerie: Essay Topics

As you read *The Glass Menagerie*, take notes on the following topics. You will be required to write a short essay on one of these topics.

1. As you work through the play, make one list of references and descriptions of objects you encounter that embed the action in the “real” world of life in the Wingfield apartment and another list of what you perceive as “non-real” devices that enhance the development of the play. Be prepared to share and defend items on your lists with explanations of how they contribute to various aspects of the play. Give thought, particularly, to how Williams interweaves items on the two lists to effect “innuendo and nuances” that contribute to his development of characterization, narrative and theme.
2. As Williams points out in his opening comments, the play is “episodic”. What does he mean by that reference?

Think about the “rhythm” and sequencing of your memories. Are they episodic? Could one argue that Williams’ use of episodic structure adds verisimilitude to his development of Tom’s memory as the structural device for accessing the past? Explain.

Give careful thought to Tom’s final speech. Does it align with the way memory works in your consciousness? Try to think of two or three examples of what specifically triggered a recurring memory in your mind stream.

3. Build a specific explanation of how you think each of the following “non-linear” references contribute to the development of such aspects as the characterization, narrative, and dramatic tensions (conflicting values, outlooks, situations) of the play.
 - Guernica
 - the “fifth” character
 - the fire escape
 - the movies
 - phonograph records
 - stage lighting
 - the D.A.R.
 - the jonquil dress
 - the warehouse
 - Blue Roses
 - the coffin “trick”
 - the unicorn
 - the blowing out of the candles at the end
4. Through both direct statement and the implications of “non-real” symbolic devices, Tennessee Williams, in his play, *The Glass Menagerie*, projects an indictment of the economic and sociological landscape of 20th century America in the years preceding World War II. How do the “real” and “non-real” aspects of the play, contribute to the shaping of Williams’ indictment?