

WORKBOOK ANSWERS

AS/A-level English Literature Workbook: *A Streetcar Named Desire*

This Answers document provides suggestions for some of the possible answers that might be given for the questions asked in the Workbook. They are not exhaustive and other answers may be acceptable, but they are intended as a guide to give teachers and students feedback.

1 Plot and structure

Plot

1 3, 8, 11, 9, 5, 6, 7, 2, 4, 10, 1

2 (a) Stanley Kowalski

(b) Desire and Cemeteries

(c) Whiskey

(d) In the bathroom

(e) A radio

(f) A comic book

(g) Shep Huntleigh

(h) Virgo

(i) Capricorn

(j) Allan Grey

(k) Blanche

(l) A bus ticket to Laurel

(m) A broken bottle top

(n) Della Robbia blue

(o) A doctor and a nurse

(p) 'This game is seven-card stud'

3 (a) Possible answers include: Blanche's arrival at the small apartment in Elysian Fields; Stanley's violence on the poker night; Blanche's failing courtship with Mitch; Stanley's discovery of her past; Mitch's refusal to marry Blanche; Mitch's attempted rape; Stanley's rape of Blanche; Stella's betrayal.

(b) Answers will vary.

4 Answers will vary.

Dramatic structure

1 Three from: their first meeting at the end of Scene 1; the discussion of the loss of Belle Reve in Scene 2; Stanley asking Blanche about the Hotel Flamingo in Scene 5; the argument over the bathroom in Scene 7; the birthday supper in Scene 8; all of Scene 10.

2 (a)

- Blanche and Stella's improvident grandfathers – 2

1 Plot and structure

- Blanche's marriage to Allan – 6
- Allan's suicide – 6
- Blanche sleeping with the soldiers – 9
- The deaths at Belle Reve – 1
- The loss of Belle Reve – 1
- Blanche losing her job in Laurel – 7
- Blanche's experiences in the Hotel Flamingo – 7
- Blanche being told to leave Laurel – 7
- Blanche's journey to Elysian Fields – 1

(b) Scene 1: introduces Belle Reve and establishes Blanche's destitution.

Scene 6: confirms the main trauma in Blanche's life (also appears in the middle of the play).

Scene 7: Blanche's lies are unravelling as we learn the truth about the past; this sets up the final confrontations between Blanche and Mitch and Blanche and Stanley.

3

Scene groupings	Descriptions	Evidence
Scenes 1–4: two consecutive days in early May	Dark comedy	Stanley's comment on Blanche's jewellery The opening exchanges with the Sailor, Negro Woman, etc Blanche's incongruity in Scene 1 Stella's descriptions of Stanley, his friends and the Hubbels Stanley giving Stella the meat package and the Negro Woman's subsequent laughter The mocking of Mitch in the poker game and the jokes Blanche's lies in her 'communications' with Shep Stanley overhearing Blanche's speech at the end of Scene 4
Scenes 5–6: a hot August evening	Elegy, nostalgia, romance	References to Shep Huntleigh Blanche's monologue in Scene 5: 'Soft people have got to – shimmer and glow' Blanche's hope for her relationship with Mitch Blanche's flirtations with the Young Man

1 Plot and structure

Scene groupings	Descriptions	Evidence
		<p>The forlorn date</p> <p>Blanche's revelations about her past, especially her marriage</p>
<p>Scenes 7–10: the afternoon and night of Blanche's birthday, September 15</p>	<p>Powerful, dramatic, tragic</p>	<p>Stanley's revelations about Blanche's past</p> <p>Blanche's songs</p> <p>Stanley's explosive violence</p> <p>Stanley's birthday gift to Blanche and her reaction</p> <p>Blanche's mental decline</p> <p>Blanche's revelations to Mitch</p> <p>Mitch's attempted rape</p> <p>The growing tension in the exchange in Scene 10</p> <p>Stanley's rape of Blanche</p>
<p>Scene 11: 'some weeks later' in October</p>	<p>Conclusion, coda, further developments</p>	<p>Poker game – a return to things as normal</p> <p>Blanche's reflections on death</p> <p>The baby</p> <p>Blanche's madness and departure</p> <p>Stanley's love-making</p> <p>The final words of the play: 'This game is seven-card stud'</p>

4 You could consider: that Blanche's tragic status is already confirmed in Scenes 1 and 2; the gothic horrors in her description of Belle Reve; the love letters; her isolation; Stanley's developing menace. Scenes 5 and 6 focus on Blanche's lies and deception and developing desperation; the violence of her husband's death. Scene 11 is less a coda than an essential culmination of the plot, as Stanley's ultimate victory is made clear.

5–6 Answers will vary.

2 Themes

1 Three from:

- Love: Stella and Stanley are 'in love', but the play does not explore this idea – its focus is on lust and desire.
- Education: although Blanche was a teacher, the play does not chart or interrogate the idea of education.
- Nature
- Science
- Kingship

2 Answers will vary.

3 (a) Blanche; metaphor; desire

(b) Blanche; exclamative / minor sentence / simile; death

(c) Blanche; repetition; reality and illusion

(d) Stanley; listing / imperative / rhetorical question; social class

(e) Stella; verbs; violence / desire

(f) Blanche; simile; death

4

Aspect of the play	Reference	How the aspect contributes to the theme of reality and illusion
Shep Huntleigh	For example: 'There isn't no millionaire! And Mitch didn't come back with roses 'cause I know where he is' (Scene 10, page 79)	Shep is effectively an illusion; an 'ideal' beau whom Blanche (re)imagines. He represents for Blanche an escape, but the audience are aware this escape is an impossible illusion.
Costume jewellery	For example: 'Bracelets of solid gold, too! Where are your pearls and gold bracelets?' (Scene 2, page 17)	Blanche performing the role of a Southern Belle. 'Costume' highlights the theatricality of her performance. Stanley's mistakes about the real value of the jewellery.
Blanche's songs	For example: 'It's only a paper moon, Just as phony as it can be' (Scene 7, page 61)	Blanche believes in magic and make believe. Contrasts with Stanley's brutal insistence on fact (especially in Scene 7).
Shaw (Stanley's work colleague)	For example: 'Kiefaber, Stanley and Shaw have tied an old tin can to the tail of a kite' (Scene 9,	Shaw is the person who provides the truth about Blanche's past. His revelations to Stanley have destroyed

2 Themes

Aspect of the play	Reference	How the aspect contributes to the theme of reality and illusion
	page 73)	Blanche's chances of living a contented (if deceptive) life with Mitch.

- 5 honky-tonk and blue piano music; trains and cars; bawdy jokes; poker; bowling; aggression
- 6 (a) Stanley has revealed the truth about Blanche's past to him.
- (b) Parrot is vulgar, coarse and embarrassing and the old maid is worried about appearances and propriety.
- (c) For example: 'You animal thing you' (page 31); Blanche describes Stanley as 'bestial' and 'ape-like' (page 41) and a 'Goat' (page 44).
- (d) 'Them kind of words'.
- (e) They have allied themselves together at this point and threatened his authority; they express displeasure at his 'unrefined' ways.
- (f) Stanley retaliates with a powerful statement that questions a fixed social hierarchy. In accordance with the American dream, every man has the right to be a King, at least in his own house. This individualism leaves no place for Blanche and her faded aristocracy. This post-war America is also, it seems, patriarchal.
- 7 You could include: Blanche and Stella's improvident grandfathers; Blanche married Allan Grey; Allan Grey committed suicide; when she was 15, Stella left Belle Reve after their father died; Stanley fought in World War II with Mitch in Italy; Stella married Stanley; Blanche slept with soldiers who were camped nearby; the DuBois family died at Belle Reve; Belle Reve had to be sold to pay off debts; Blanche became an English teacher; Blanche lost her job in Laurel; Blanche stayed at the Hotel Flamingo and slept with many men; Blanche was told to leave Laurel.
- 8 (a) The Varsouviana polka was the music Blanche danced to the night her husband committed suicide.
- (b) Mitch's cigarette case evokes his first girlfriend, who died.
- (c) References to Shep Huntleigh recall a former 'beau' (boyfriend) of Blanche's.
- (d) The 'Young Man' collecting money for the newspaper evokes the ghost of Allan Grey.
- (e) The sound of a gun shot evokes Allan Grey's suicide.
- (f) The Mexican woman selling flowers for the dead is a reminder of the deaths at Belle Reve.
- (g) Blanche's 'crumpled white satin evening gown and a pair of scuffed silver slippers' recall Blanche's former glamour and privilege as a Southern Belle.
- 9 (a) A 'blinding light'.

2 Themes

(b) It was the music she was listening and dancing to when she told her husband he disgusted her.

(c) The motif of the Varsouviana indicates that the trauma and guilt she felt that day has never gone away; Blanche has searched but been unable to feel love in the same way. Her desire will always be for young men (like the newspaper seller) as she seeks atonement for her guilt.

10 For example: 'Sometimes their breathing is hoarse, and sometimes it rattles, and sometimes they even cry out to you, "Don't let me go!"'

- Patterning – repeated structure; tripling.
- The horrifying development from 'hoarse' to 'rattles' to 'cry out'.
- Emphasises that death is shocking, horrific and noisy and that those who die are desperate to stay alive.

11 Answers will vary.

12 Your answers could consider the following:

The Passion of a Moth: Blanche's stage directions in Scene 1; she is fragile, belongs to the night and is drawn to a dangerous flame.

Blanche's Chair in the Moon: Links to Blanche's song (Paper Moon); dreams, reality and magic.

The Primary Colors: Suggests the recurring colour motifs in the play, especially Stanley and his friends (see the stage directions at the beginning of Scene 3).

The Poker Night: Points to the centrality of Scene 3 in the play, and also the significance of the poker game in Scene 11; working class; Stanley's attempts to 'win the game'; the importance of bluffing and deception; Stanley wins the poker game in Scene 11, just as he wins the contest with Blanche.

13 Critic Felicia Hardison Londrè claims the title establishes "the importance of metaphor" in the play itself. Also, the 'mundane concreteness of "streetcar" and the abstract quality of aspiration evoked in "desire"' suggest the oppositions at work in the play. The title also 'ties the action to a specific locale' and it 'plants the notion of movement from one place to another'.

14 (a) Fate; desire leading to death.

(b) Desire is brutal, unrefined, primal – but Blanche feels it too; Stella and Blanche's awareness of the power of desire; Blanche's awareness that 'desire' brought about her downfall.

(c) Desire is grimly insistent and, for Blanche and Mitch, very disappointing.

15 She was drawn towards his Sergeant's uniform; his drive; his sexual attractiveness; his social background ('I pulled you down off them columns and how you loved it').

16 Possible points:

2 Themes

- Steve and Eunice's relationship is as sexualised and passionate as Stanley and Stella's.
- They therefore 'normalise' Stanley and Stella's relationship.
- They are comic foils for Stanley and Stella.
- They help to confirm the passionate atmosphere of New Orleans.

17–18 Five from: Allan Grey (his sexuality); Shep Huntleigh (he is married); young soldiers from an army camp near Belle Reve (casual and frequent sexual encounters); a 17-year-old student of Blanche's (she was his teacher); various men at Hotel Flamingo (probably prostitution); Mitch (her lies and deception); Stanley (he is her brother-in-law).

19 homosexuality; linked; fight off; opposite; Belle Reve; tragic downfall

20 Answers will vary.

3 Characterisation

Character overview

1 A Blanche; B Stella; C Stella; D Steve; E Mitch; F Stanley; G Mitch; H Blanche; I Stanley; J Mexican Woman; K Eunice; L Young Man; M Stanley

2 A Stanley; B Stella; C Steve; D Eunice; E Blanche; F Mitch

3 A: Stanley's primitive, animalistic qualities.

B: Stella's passion for Stanley; she is drawn to his aggression.

C: Steve's masculinity; his interest in poker; preference for the status quo.

D: Eunice's working-class gut instinct for survival; female 'support' for Stella.

E: Blanche's ambiguity; her language of romance juxtaposes with her illicit desire.

F: Mitch's naïveté.

4 **Blanche is the only character shown to have psychological depth:**

The expressionistic devices, such as the noises of the jungle, are used to show only Blanche's interior mind.

Her monologues reveal an emotional and poetic intensity.

She is an ambiguous and complex character – others are psychologically more straightforward.

Blanche isn't the only character to have psychological depth:

Different performers can bring underlying complexities to the roles (for example, Brando's 'softening' of Stanley).

Stella's silences and platitudes can hide an inner turmoil, expressed finally in her 'luxurious sobbing' in Scene 11.

Stanley's passion and love for Stella, at the end of Scene 3, reveals a humanity and greater complexity.

Mitch is a shy, slow-thinking man who cares deeply for his mother and whose first love died. His actions in Scene 9 also reveal him to be sexually frustrated.

Blanche DuBois

1 E and H

2 B: A moth is associated with the night.

Moths are drawn towards the light – but dangerously so?

Moths are always moving; nervous energy.

C: One of many instances of characters getting undressed: parallels with Stanley?

3 Characterisation

Blanche's flirtatiousness – does she know she can be seen?

Continued association with the colour white.

D: Blanche's association with romance.

Blanche's illicit sexual desire.

'Dreamily' – Blanche is linked to ideas about fantasy.

E: The Varsouviana is linked to Blanche's psychological decline.

Blanche is aware of her desperate situation.

Blanche's alcoholism is explained.

F: 'soiled and crumpled' symbolises her decline as a Southern Belle.

The colour white again, but it is soiled, suggesting her lost innocence.

Blanche's madness – she is lost in her fantasy as a charming Southern Belle.

3 (a)

- Her 'incongruous' appearance.
- Her 'uncertain manner'.
- Her hesitant speech.
- She does not wish to engage in a conversation with Eunice.
- Her fear upon hearing the screeching cat.
- Drinking whiskey suggests her nervous state.

(b)

- Stanley lacks the culture and refinement valued by Blanche and which she associates with society's progress.
- Stanley is instead an animal or a caveman – primal, sexual, violent.
- Stella should reject him and what he represents.

(c)

- Crucially, Stella says nothing in response.
- She does, however, respond to **Stanley's** call.
- Stella physically walks away from Blanche and towards Stanley.
- She then embraces him 'fiercely' to demonstrate to Blanche where her loyalties lie.

3 Characterisation

- Blanche has been unsuccessful in persuading Stella.

(d)

- Blanche has relied on her beauty to attract men.
- Men provide shelter and temporary financial security.
- Blanche feels her beauty is fading and she can no longer attract men.
- She is therefore without 'shelter' and is adrift.

(e)

- Mitch represents Blanche's last hope of settling down.
- Mitch is working class, awkward and a hapless suitor; he chooses inappropriate topics of conversation.
- Blanche is Mitch's social and intellectual superior; she even laughs at him at one point.
- The awkward conversation and the differences in social class indicate that their relationship is unlikely to be a success.

4 (a)

- Her dependence on alcohol.
- 'I've got to keep a hold of myself!'
- She speaks with a 'feverish vivacity'.
- 'I'm – *not very well* ...'
- Her hyperbolic and heightened emotional description of the loss of Belle Reve.
- The audience hear the music of the polka for the first time as the scene ends.

(b)

- Her fantasies relate to her past as a genteel Southern Belle.
- She fantasises about death.
- Her fantasies have a romantic, lyrical quality as well, such as the 'nice-looking ship's doctor'.
- The death of her husband and its attendant guilt also haunts Blanche in her fantasies.

(c)

- Blanche's hesitancy: 'I ...'; 'She's –'

3 Characterisation

- The sound of drums.
 - Blanche moves 'fearfully' and 'quickly'.
 - Blanche speaks in a 'frightening whisper'.
 - The music of the Varsouviana.
 - Blanche's eyes are 'wide and brilliant'.
 - Lighting effects: 'lurid reflections appear on the walls in odd, sinuous shapes'.
 - The Varsouviana is distorted and accompanied by the 'cries and noises of the jungle'.
- 5 Many readers comment on how our sympathies for Blanche develop as the play progresses, but especially in Scenes 8, 9, 10 and 11: as her madness takes hold, she is revealed to be a helpless victim of circumstance and of Stanley. Despite her shortcomings, her claim that 'deliberate cruelty is not forgivable' is given dramatic form and her tragic status is heightened. However, in the first half of the play in particular, Blanche tries to manipulate both Stella and Stanley, and effectively seeks to break up their marriage. She allows Stella to wait on her and we learn of her sexual perversity; for instance, in her interactions with the Young Man.

Stanley Kowalski

- 1 Answers will vary.
- 2 (a) Answers will vary.
- (b)

Aspect of Stanley's character	Suggested scene	Quotation(s)
Sexualised and passionate	Scene 1	'Meat!' 'The centre of his life has been the pleasure of women' 'richly feathered male bird among hens' 'gaudy seed-bearer' 'He sizes women up at a glance'
Dominant and commanding	Scene 3	'Get off the table, Mitch' 'Shut up.' 'Turn it off!'
Protective of his territory	Scene 7	'Get OUT of the BATHROOM! Must I speak more plainly?' 'She's not stayin' here after Tuesday'

3 Characterisation

Aspect of Stanley's character	Suggested scene	Quotation(s)
Physically aggressive	Scene 8	<i>He hurls a plate to the floor</i> <i>He seizes her arm</i> <i>Her hurls a cup and saucer to the floor</i>
Competitive	Scene 11	'Drew to an inside straight and made it, by God' 'To hold front position in this rat-race you've got to believe you are lucky'

(c)

- He loses at poker in Scene 3.
 - He mistakes rhinestone for diamonds.
 - At the end of Scene 3, he begs for Stella to return.
 - His stature might be diminished in the final scene, with Mitch's accusations and Stella's impassive responses to his advances.
- 3 (a) Stanley has a focus on money/materialism here; but more so, this reveals his competitive quality – he doesn't like the thought of being cheated.
- (b) Stanley is very ambitious and is likely to be successful owing to his hard work – he is therefore benefiting from a modern egalitarian (rather than aristocratic) social structure.
- (c) Stanley has no time for art and culture: he is not the 'refined type'. His interests are bowling, cars and poker.
- (d) Stanley's behaviour is uncouth, but he resents the challenge to his sovereignty. Class distinctions mean nothing in this society.
- (e) This is Stanley stating his belief in the egalitarian principles of the American dream – which he feels has given him opportunities to be successful.
- (f) Stanley's competitiveness is revealed here: he does not believe in fate, he believes he has made his own success through self-belief and confidence.
- 4 Answers will vary.
- 5 (a) Answers will vary.
- (b) First quote: This supports perspective A because Stanley is bringing a fresh virility to the dying Old South symbolised by Belle Reve.
- Second quote: This supports perspective B because Stanley is being deliberately cruel here. He doesn't sympathise with or understand Blanche's craving for fantasy and magic: he only wants to take it down.

3 Characterisation

6 A sample paragraph:

Stanley, as a representative of the new, post-war America, brings a much-needed energy and vitality to the South. Even Blanche acknowledges this in Scene 2 when she says to Stella that he is 'what we need to mix with our blood now that we've lost Belle Reve'. The reference to 'blood' suggests Stanley is bringing a fresh virility to the dying Old South – symbolised in the play by Belle Reve. This is a perspective supported by Adler, who observes that Stanley is a 'new, untamed pioneer' who is bringing to the south an 'exuberant' power.

Stella Kowalski

1–2 Answers will vary.

3 Stella is given fewer stage directions and Williams uses no figurative language to describe her.

Like Blanche, Stella is contrasted with her surroundings but crucially she has adjusted to the new America.

Williams suggests her relationship with Stanley is sexual and unequal when she catches his meat.

4 Blanche adopts a dominant role in the conversation: she uses a command ('stand up') and Stella's response is very brief indeed.

Stella tamely resists before she finally 'complies'.

Blanche calls Stella a 'child' – treating her as an infant.

Blanche is trying to re-establish their childhood relationship as sisters – to take Stella back into the past. Stella's reluctance therefore suggests her willingness to embrace the present.

5 Put simply, Stella has no choice: a single woman with a child in 1940s America would find it very difficult indeed to secure stable financial independence. But one suspects that, more than this, it is her feelings for Stanley that override all else, including her loyalties to her sister. Throughout the play, her desire for Stanley is made evident – moments after Stanley hits her, her 'eyes go blind with tenderness' as they are inexorably pulled back towards each other and, again, in Scene 4 her passionate devotion is clear. There is never any indication that Stella would choose Blanche over her husband. Critics have also speculated that Stella's motherhood will give her a new role and purpose if the passion in their marriage should fade (her impassive response to Stanley's advances at the end of the play perhaps suggests this). Or maybe as a DuBois, Stella, like her sister, would prefer to live a narcotised illusory lie than face up to the more painful reality.

Harold 'Mitch' Mitchell

1 Answers will vary.

3 Characterisation

2 (a)

Mitch's role	Evidence
Mitch represents the possibility of future happiness or security for Blanche.	'Yes – I <i>want</i> Mitch ... <i>very badly!</i> Just think! If it happens! I can leave here and not be anyone's problem'
Mitch emphasises Blanche and Stanley's vividness through his contrasting mediocrity.	'BLANCHE <i>waltzes to the music with romantic gestures. MITCH is delighted and moves in awkward imitation like a dancing bear.</i> ' In Scene 11, Mitch accuses Stanley of destroying Blanche, only for Stanley to push him aside and say 'Quit the blabber!'
Mitch allows Williams to further explore the theme of death.	His mother is dying; he was in love with a 'strange', 'sweet' girl who died; the cigarette case and the inscription.
Mitch is a comic foil for Stanley's strength and triumph.	He asks Blanche how much she weighs; he dances 'like a bear'; he is bullied by Stanley – 'we'll fix you a sugar-tit'.
Mitch confirms Stanley as a loyal friend.	'Mitch is a buddy of mine ... I'd have that on my conscience the rest of my life if I knew all that stuff and let my best friend get caught!'

(b) Answers will vary.

3 Answers could consider:

- what the other men call him at the poker game in Scene 3
- Mitch's various attempts to separate himself from the 'male' poker game
- Mitch's awkward advances in Scene 6
- Mitch's 'failed' rape attempt at the end of Scene 9
- the 'strange', 'sweet' young girlfriend who died
- Mitch's relationship with his mother.

4 Form, setting and Language

Form

- 1 The form of a literary text refers to its overall shape and the type of text it is. *A Streetcar Named Desire* is primarily a **dramatic** text (rather than a poem or a novel). Literature students can be more specific than this as well, though, and consider the influence of **genre(s)** in the text – comedy, tragedy, romance, etc.
- 2
 - (a) The music of the Varsouviana polka expresses Blanche's recurring guilt.
 - (b) The sound of trains represents the modern, urban world intruding on Blanche's delicate emotional state.
 - (c) The Mexican Woman represents Blanche's obsession with death.
 - (d) The 'inhuman voices like cries in the jungle' represent Blanche's madness and loss of control.
- 3 There are certainly plenty of sensationalised, melodramatic moments in the play: Stanley's 'plot' to rid himself of the promiscuous sister; Blanche's hysteria; Stanley's drunken rage in Scene 3; Mitch's attempted rape; Stanley raping Blanche; the suggestion of the ghost of Allan in the sound effects; the horrific figure of the matron.

However, looking at the play as a whole, these incidents are not there to thrill the audience as in a melodrama. Complex, subtle characterisation and motivation is a hallmark of the play, and these incidents are therefore used to suggest and throw light on the characters involved.

- 4
 - (a) Telling her husband he disgusted her, which led to his suicide; her affair with a teenage student; her promiscuity and prostitution in the Hotel Flamingo; her lies and deception.
 - (b) Her husband's suicide – because of the recurring polka music.
 - (c) She is destitute and helpless; Mitch cannot marry her and tries to rape her; she loses her sanity; she is raped; she is cast out by her sister; she will spend the rest of her life in a lunatic asylum.
 - (d) Homosexuality was illegal at the time the play was set; Allan reaches out to Blanche for help; she instead says he disgusted her, which led to his suicide.
 - (e) On the one hand their life seems to continue as normal now Blanche has gone. The play has even been criticised for letting Stanley off too lightly. Stella, however, doesn't respond to Stanley's advances at the end, and Stanley seems to have lost some of the respect of his friends in the final scene, especially Mitch. Stella is distraught at the fate of her sister.
- 5

Feature of a tragic hero / heroine	Evidence
One of the main aims of a tragedy is to make the	The brutal treatment of Blanche, especially in the final three scenes.

4 Form, setting and Language

Feature of a tragic hero / heroine	Evidence
audience feel pity (<i>pathos</i>) for the hero.	Her imagined death in the arms of the ship's doctor. Blanche's fragility and vulnerability throughout.
Another important aim of a tragedy is to make the audience feel terror for the hero.	Claustrophobic tension building, such as the arguments over the bathroom. Stanley's discoveries of Blanche's past. The contrasting attitudes and values from the beginning of the play between Stanley and Blanche. The Mexican Woman. Terror evoked throughout Scene 10 and in Blanche's increasing desperation.
The tragic hero is identifiably 'human' – that is, neither entirely good nor entirely bad – so we can identify with their plight.	Blanche is certainly a complex character. Despite her qualities, she is flawed – she deceives and manipulates; she puts on airs and graces; she refuses to adapt to her new surroundings.
The tragic hero is normally of noble birth and has a higher social status than other characters.	Blanche was certainly born into a 'higher' social class, but that way of life was already in decline even before she was born. Despite her background, Blanche spends most of her adult life being desperately poor and without the power to influence her fate.
A tragedy describes the hero's fall from status and prosperity to desolation, isolation and, often, madness. This reversal of fortune can be called <i>peripeteia</i> .	Despite her 'aristocratic' birth, Blanche is already homeless by the time she arrives at Elysian Fields. She goes on to be betrayed by her family and lose her sanity.
The tragic decline is brought about in part by a tragic flaw or error of judgement in the hero, known as their <i>hamartia</i> .	Blanche is unable to adapt to her new surroundings, preferring instead 'make-believe' and illusion. Blanche also has 'brutal' desire, which leads to her decline.
The tragic hero dies at the end of the tragedy.	Blanche does not die, but she is sent to a lunatic asylum – a 'fate worse than death', according to Williams (referring to his sister's experiences in a psychiatric hospital).

6 Answers will vary.

Setting and staging

- 1 (a) Stella
(b) Steve

4 Form, setting and Language

- (c) Mitch
- (d) Stanley
- (e) Mitch
- (f) Blanche
- 2 (a) The alliterative pair of nouns 'power and pride' reinforces Stanley strength; this is another figurative reference to animals in the play and confirms Stanley's sexual qualities and desires; 'richly feathered' might suggest arrogance and has echoes of Stanley's vividly coloured clothing.
- (b) 'lurid' has certain seedy, unpleasant connotations; the bright, primary colours are associated with masculinity in the play, especially Stanley's; 'coarse' and 'direct' are antithetical to Blanche's values of kindness and her preference for soft light and colours.
- (c) The Matron is a figure of horror in this scene, with suggestions of the influence of Southern gothic; the simile, and the accompanying pair of adjectives 'bold and toneless' again suggests something unpleasant; her dress is a clear dramatic and visual contrast with Blanche's 'Della Robia blue' jacket; the Matron here suggests and anticipates Blanche's horrifying experiences in the asylum.
- (d) Williams is here deploying expressionistic techniques: the lurid reflections expressing Blanche's mental decline. The stage directions also seem to emphasise the horror and terror of this particular scene, perhaps linking it also therefore to the Southern gothic through the pair of adjectives 'grotesque and menacing'. Blanche's terror is also reinforced through her increasingly hysterical actions expressed through the verbs. Stanley's exit is also likely to generate tragic fear for Blanche's situation.
- 3 (a) Blue piano / jazz music (in its various forms); a cat's screech; Varsouviana polka; a gun shot; rumba music and the Viennese waltz on the radio; a confusion of street cries; the sounds of Steve and Eunice fighting; inhuman voices; the clicking of the telephone off the hook; the cathedral chimes; echoing, mysterious voices.
- (b) Answers will vary.
- 4 plastic theatre; psychology; suicide; repetition; guilt; bus ticket; fragmented and nightmarish
- 5 In Scene 1 the blue piano gets louder, reflecting Blanche's sense of loss over Belle Reve and Stella leaving her behind.

At the end of Scene 4 we hear the blue piano and trumpet and drums. Stella has made her feelings clear – she is going to stay with Stanley. Blanche is isolated and the blue piano is on Stanley's side.

At the end of Scene 7 the piano goes into a 'hectic breakdown': Blanche may know or suspect that Stella has found out about her past. Her grip on reality is loosening.

In Scene 10 the blue piano drums up louder and 'turns into the roar of an approaching locomotive': the intrusive piano and the locomotive are associated with the brutality of Stanley and the urban setting.

4 Form, setting and Language

Language

1 (a) repetition

(b) rhetorical question

(c) simile

(d) metaphor

(e) rule of three

2 Answers will vary.

3 (a)

- Complex, high-register vocabulary: 'uncavalier'; 'uncouth apparel'.
- Poetic and figurative expressions: 'face like a thundercloud'.
- Hyperbole: 'The unforgivable insult to a lady'.
- Exclamations: 'My, my, what a cold shoulder!'
- A range of other literary techniques and patterning, making her dialogue appear stylised and artificial: repetition ('I forgive you' and 'my, my'); sequence of questions; at the end of the passage, Blanche uses hypophora (a rhetorical technique in which a speaker poses a question and then answers it).

(b)

- Impolite language: 'QUIET IN THERE!'
- Colloquial expressions: 'All right, Mac. See you!'; 'Keep your seat'.
- Non-standard vocabulary and grammar: 'I'm team captain, ain't I?'; 'I don't wanta'.
- Short sentences: 'Go on, Mac'.
- Direct, unsophisticated words and phrases: 'we're not gonna bowl at Riley's, we're gonna bowl at West Side or Gala!'

(c) 'There's lots of things that could have happened' (page 67); 'I don't listen to you when you are being morbid!' (page 45); 'Now will you stop talking foolish?' (page 46); 'In the first place, Blanche wouldn't go on a bus' (page 63).

Unlike Blanche, Stella has been able to cope with the loss of the values of the American South and her new circumstances. Stella has adapted to her environment and she seems to have been able to deal with this by deliberately **not** reflecting on her surroundings, on Blanche's desperate situation and, crucially, on her own hand in Blanche's deterioration. This is reflected in the banal, clichéd way in which she speaks – each sentence seems an effort to deflect reality and any accusations **away** from her.

4 (a)

4 Form, setting and Language

Image, motif, symbol	Example from the play	What the image, motif or symbol represents or expresses
The motif of the Chinese paper lantern	<p>'adorable little coloured paper lantern' (page 30)</p> <p>Soft people have to 'put a paper lantern over the light' (page 45)</p> <p>Stanley rips down the lantern (page 87)</p>	<p>Blanche prefers illusion and magic to reality.</p> <p>Stanley insists on the harsh light of truth.</p>
The motif of the streetcar	Mentioned three times – Blanche's arrival in Scene 1 (page 5); Scene 4 (page 40); Scene 6 (page 50)	The streetcar named Desire links to fate, death and brutality.
The motif of the blue piano	Runs throughout the play. Some interesting appearances include at the end of Scene 4 and towards the end of Scene 10	<p>The 'spirit of the life' of New Orleans.</p> <p>The intrusive modern world.</p> <p>Blanche's own feeling of isolation.</p>
The symbol of the spilt coke on Blanche's dress	'Right on my pretty white skirt!' (page 46)	<p>Blanche's lost innocence and tarnished past.</p> <p>Sexual associations.</p>
The symbol of the meat package	'Meat!' (page 4)	<p>Stanley's 'primitive' nature.</p> <p>Patriarchal society and Stella's submissive role.</p>
Colour symbolism – red	<p>Blanche's red satin robe (page 18 and page 83)</p> <p>The tamale vendor's cry 'red hot' (page 23)</p> <p>The primary colours and the watermelon (page 24)</p>	Passion, desire, seduction.
Colour symbolism – white	<p>Blanche's white suit (page 5)</p> <p>Her white skirt (page 46)</p> <p>'I'll be buried at sea sewn up in a clean white sack and dropped overboard' (page 85)</p>	<p>Blanche's incongruity with New Orleans.</p> <p>Blanche's (pretended) innocence.</p> <p>Blanche's desire for purity.</p>
Images of animals associated with Stanley	<p>'ape-like' (page 41)</p> <p>Stella calls Stanley a 'pig' (page 65)</p> <p>'richly feathered male bird among hens' (page 13)</p>	<p>Stanley's lack of refinement.</p> <p>Suggesting his animal desire and sexuality.</p>
Images of water	<p>Blanche's song (page 16)</p> <p>'taking a swim, a moonlight swim' (page 75)</p> <p>'I'm going to die on the sea' (page</p>	Cleansing of sins and the past.

4 Form, setting and Language

Image, motif, symbol	Example from the play	What the image, motif or symbol represents or expresses
	85) 'Oh, I feel so good after a long, hot bath' (page 63)	

(b) Literary terminology and concepts: visual motif; dramatic device; symbolic function; simile; rule of three; simile.

Quotations and specific references: Blanche says after her bath in Scene 2 that she feels 'like a brand new human being!' Later, in Scene 7, Blanche says she feels 'so good' after her 'long, hot bath ... good and cool and – rested!'

Explorations and analysis of the evidence: suggest the conflict in the cramped apartment; Blanche is bathing to purify herself and make herself new again. She wants to wash away the filth not only of the unfamiliar city but also cleanse the guilt she feels due to her role in her husband's suicide.

5 Answers will vary.

5 Contexts

- 1 Williams' sexuality A
- Post-war America C
- The American South C, B
- Expressionism B
- Southern gothic B
- Southern Belle C
- World War II C
- Strindberg's play *Miss Julie* B
- Rose Williams' schizophrenia A
- Tragedy B
- Plastic theatre B
- Chekov's play *The Cherry Orchard* B
- Williams' hypochondria, depression and fear of death A

2 Allan Grey: Williams' sexuality

The Varsouviana music: expressionism / plastic theatre

Belle Reve: the American South / Southern gothic

3 (a) A Stanley Kowalski; B Blanche's madness; C The theme of guilt; D Allan Grey and Blanche's disastrous marriage; E The theme of death

(b) Responses could include reference to Williams' sister Rose's illness and treatment and Williams' subsequent guilt.

Literary and cultural contexts

4 (a) Blanche doesn't die but, we can assume, she will spend her remaining days in a mental hospital – a fate worse than death, according to Williams.

(b) Blanche eventually succumbs fully to her fantasy world, but she has learned that she has always depended on the kindness of strangers and there is a tragic dignity in her acceptance of her fate.

(c) Stanley could be seen as the antagonist and he certainly does play a key role in Blanche's destruction.

(d) 'We've had this date with each other from the beginning' – inevitability in Stanley's attack growing throughout the play; also the streetcar on its single track taking Blanche to 'Cemeteries' and 'Elysian Fields'.

5 (a) Confederate; nostalgia; William Faulkner; grotesque; madness; decay; supernatural

5 Contexts

- (b)** A: grotesque deaths; hyperbole; a decaying Southern family and its faded house.
B: a bizarre supernatural element; preoccupation with death and the past.
C: the Southern Belle taken to a bizarre extreme; madness.

Historical and social contexts

6 (a)

- 'A great big place with white columns'.
- 'The Grim Reaper has put up his tent on our doorstep!'
- 'Our improvident grandfathers and father and uncles and brothers exchanged the land for their epic fornications'.
- 'Maybe he's what we need to mix our blood now that we've lost Belle Reve'.
- 'I pulled you down off them columns and how you loved it'.

(b) A large, decaying Southern plantation that has been lost due to the 'fornications' and deaths of the DuBois family.

(c) Stanley is largely interested in the material value of Belle Reve and is concerned he is being 'swindled' by his sister-in-law.

(d)

- Blanche wears hats, gloves and owns a fan.
- Blanche worked as an English teacher: 'I teach high school. In Laurel.'
- Blanche's polite, formal way of speaking: 'I thought I would if it's not inconvenient for you all'.
- Blanche's flirtations with Stanley in Scene 2: 'Would you think it possible I was once considered to be – attractive?'
- Blanche resists Mitch's advances in Scene 6: 'I liked the kiss very much. It was the other little – familiarity – that I – felt obliged to – discourage'.
- Blanche's literary allusions and ability to speak French suggest she is highly educated.

(e) Remaining chaste: 'I've run for protection, Stella, from under one leaky roof to another leaky roof'.

(f) Perhaps in the past Blanche may have defined herself as a Southern Belle; even after her arrival at Elysian Fields she continues to keep up this act because it is less painful than facing the truth about her hard-drinking, destitution and promiscuity.

7 (a) Gambling; poverty; 'relatively warm and easy intermingling of races'; trains and streetcars; drinking; domestic violence; infidelity; bowling; cars; radios.

5 Contexts

- (b)** Modern, post-war America is full of vitality but it is also a thrusting, violent place with an emphasis on individual materialism rather than art and refinement.
- (c)** 'What I am is one hundred per cent American, born and raised in the greatest country on earth and proud as hell of it'; 'To hold front position in this rat-race you've got to believe you are lucky.'
- (d)** Answers will vary.
- 8** Your response to this question will depend on your perspective on the character of Stanley. Stanley has set out to heartlessly destroy Blanche and has used ideas about individualism ('Every man is King!') and competitive, even Darwinian self-sufficiency ('you've got to believe you are lucky') to justify and fulfil his actions. If our sympathies lie with Blanche and we see only the heartless brutality of Stanley, then, indeed, the play does seem to question the values of the American dream. However, if we see Stanley as a much-needed injection of working-class energy and vitality against a corrupt and manipulative aristocracy, then his defeat of Blanche is a triumph of the egalitarian American spirit.
- 9** A: plastic theatre / expressionism; Southern gothic; Rose Williams' schizophrenia; tragedy.
B: American South; Southern gothic; plastic theatre / expressionism; Chekhov's *The Cherry Orchard*.
C: post-war America; Williams' father; tragedy.

6 Critical approaches

1 Answers will vary.

2 (a) The train announces Blanche's journey/arrival and suggests the urban, industrial New Orleans.

The heat and steam help to create a sultry, passionate atmosphere.

Scene 6 is the moment Blanche describes her husband's suicide beside a lake; fog may also link to Blanche's attempts to remember her past.

The close-ups link with the theme of desire, perhaps 'softening' the impact of the rape for the censors.

Closing the shutters suggests Blanche's need for privacy and to shut out reality and extinguish the 'light'.

(b–c) Answers will vary.

(d) Stella's decision to remain with Stanley suggests his victory and the triumph of way of life he symbolises. Stanley can no longer represent the future if Stella leaves with his baby.

3 (a–d) Answers will vary.

(e) While Blanche sees Stanley as a brutal ape, 'there is a subtle irony in her reflexive reversion to a Southern belle's habits of thought – that is, emotional dependence on a patriarchal system of male protection for the helpless female – just moments after she has said "I'm going to do something. Get hold of myself and make myself a new life!"' (Londrè)

4 (a)

- The DuBois family would have got their wealth from the land and they would formerly have owned slaves.
- Due to the epic fornications and expensive funerals, the wealth is lost to a bank.
- Stanley gets his money from his own, 'blue collar' work.
- He spends his money on material goods and leisure – cars, radio, bowling, etc.

(b) Answers will vary.

5 (a)

- 'big capable hands' – Stanley's masculinity puts him in a better position to look after the papers (although Blanche is probably being ironic here).
- 'under the Napoleonic code – a man has to take an interest in his wife's affairs' – the patriarchal code; Stanley's need to look after and protect his growing family.

(b)

- 'I hereby endow you with them' – Blanche is formally passing on responsibility of Belle Reve to the working-class Stanley.

6 Critical approaches

- 'she leans back and closes her eyes' – Blanche takes no interest in her former wealth.

(c) Feminist perspective: Stanley's 'big capable hands' confirm his masculinity and his perceived ability to deal with the public world of finance.

Political perspective: Blanche's actions are symbolic of the decaying aristocracy handing over power and capital to the new working classes.

7 Boosting your skills

Tackling question types

- 1 A AO1; B AO5; C AO4; D AO1; E AO3; F AO1; G AO5; H AO2; I AO3
- 2 Answers will vary.
- 3 (a) This type of question will also ask you to look at a particular aspect of the play, such as a theme or, in this case, a character. However, you will need to examine this aspect in the light of the given statement. Ultimately, you are being asked to provide **your own** perspective on the statement.

(b) Answers will vary.

Essay planning and structure (AO1)

- 1 The following are not likely to help you to write a successful essay:
 - Spend no more than two minutes planning – it is more important that you use the time writing a five-page essay.
 - Do not worry about having a central argument – hopefully you will have thought of one by the time you write your conclusion.
 - Spend the planning time trying to remember how you wrote your recent A grade mock essay on a similar theme.
- 2 (a) Weigh up the evidence, look at both sides and come to a clear argument of your own in relation to the statement.

(b) To consider the extent to which Stella is representative of female characters in the play and also perhaps to locate her in the contexts of post-war America.

(c)–(d) **Weak** suggests a lack of power and strength, both physically and mentally. Stella is physically weaker than Stanley, but perhaps she does have a mental strength to cope with her new economic and social circumstances.

Passive might mean accepting a situation without doing anything about it. Stella seems to passively accept her situation at Elysian Fields. She also appears largely passive in the face of Stanley's physical abuse. She is shown to be very upset at Blanche's fate, but, through her inactivity, she has contributed towards it.

(e) Consider the whole play and also see whether or not Stella changes in the course of the play.
- 3–4 Answers will vary.
- 5 (a) Answers will vary.

(b) C, A, B: it might be best to start with Blanche and then compare her with Stanley before looking at the conflict between the two of them.

(c)–(d) Answers will vary.

7 Boosting your skills

- 6 (a) Answers will vary (see earlier answers to 2 (c) and (d) for some possible points).
- (b) The student is being far too strong in their unqualified agreement with the statement: studying literature should open up critical debates, not shut them down. The student also repeats the words in the question (weak and passive). The student should try to find other ways of saying 'In this essay, I am going to ...'.
- (c) Answers will vary.
- 7 (a) B and C
- (b) Answers will vary.
- 8 Answers will vary.

Essay-writing skills (AO1)

- 1 'A Streetcar Named Desire' requires capital letters and quotation marks.
- The quotation is not integrated or appropriately contextualised.
- The quotation is not analysed (perhaps something on Mitch's inarticulacy and rage suggested in the string of elliptical utterances).
- The paragraph loses its focus on Mitch and becomes a study of Stanley instead.
- 2 (b) Stella refuses to engage with Blanche's emotional cries for help because she is 'being morbid'.
- (c) In the climactic rape scene, Stanley violently strips away Blanche's fantasy when he claims that 'there isn't a goddam thing but imagination'.
- (d) After Blanche condescendingly calls him a 'healthy Polack' in Scene 8, Stanley proudly defends himself. He argues that people from Poland are called 'Poles, not Polacks'. He goes on to state that he instead considers himself an American, 'born and raised in the greatest country on earth'.
- 3 (a) performs; Southern Belle; formal; French; ironically; plantation; literature; 1947; retreating; modern age
- (b) References to contexts are **emboldened**. Note how they have been integrated as part of the analysis of the quotations. There is also recognition of how audiences in 1947 could have responded to this aspect of Blanche's character. The final sentence acknowledges how this context helps Williams to explore the theme of 'The Past'.
- Blanche frequently performs the role of a **chaste Southern Belle**. She refuses to give Mitch anything more than a 'goodnight kiss'. In Scene 6, to Mitch's evident confusion, she uses elaborately formal turns of phrase, such as 'You may release me now' and 'unhand me, sir'. She even attempts to speak to him in French. Blanche is clearly and ironically putting on **the airs and graces of a Southern Belle: wealthy daughters of Southern plantation owners, they were expected to be chaste, well-mannered and educated in literature and foreign languages. Audiences in 1947 would already have identified**

7 Boosting your skills

the concept of a Southern Belle as an anachronism. So, in playing this role, Blanche is yet again retreating into the past – the modern age is too difficult for her.

4 (a)

Quotation	Analysis
all grunting like him [Stanley], and swilling and gnawing and hulking! Scene 4, page 41	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Patterning of verbs suggesting Stanley and his friends focus on repetitive and unrefined physical activity
The soft people have got to – shimmer and glow – put a – paper lantern over the light. Scene 5, page 45	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ‘shimmer and glow’ – pair of verbs with connotations of magic and fantasy. • Motif and metaphor of the paper lantern and its contribution to the theme of reality and illusion; Blanche is scared of the harsh light and the truth it might reveal.
Dame Blanche Scene 7, page 59	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ironic epithet. • Stanley has learned that Blanche is not the genteel woman she pretends to be.
Mr Kowalski is too busy making a pig of himself to think of anything else! Scene 8, page 65	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Animal imagery. • Ironically formal address ‘Mr Kowalski’ contrasts with the noun ‘pig’. • Exclamation to suggest Stella’s disgust.
Kiefaber, Stanley and Shaw have tied an old tin can to the tail of the kite. Scene 9, page 73	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Metaphor of the kite – suggesting Blanche’s desire to escape. • ‘Tin cans’ bring her down to earth. • Rule of three might suggest the three have conspired against her.
Those cathedral bells – they’re the only clean thing in the Quarter Scene 11, page 84	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aural imagery. • Symbol is a reminder of the dirt and sin characterising the neighbourhood.

(b) Answers will vary.

Essay practice

1 Answers will vary.

2 (a) ‘A Streetcar Named Desire’

(b) Embed quotation and look to reduce its length.

(c) The simile ‘like rubbish’.

7 Boosting your skills

(d) A reference to the decline and decay of Southern plantations since the end of the Civil War.

(e) A linking signpost such as 'Furthermore' or even just 'Death is **also** explored with the dramatic presentation ...'.

(f) As Blanche slides further into madness in during her confrontation with Mitch in Scene 9, she and the audience hear a 'distant revolver shot'.

(g) The ghostly gunshot suggests Blanche's recurring guilt over her role in the death of her husband. Williams is using features of plastic theatre to externalise Blanche's interior emotions.

3 Three from:

- Clear link with the previous paragraph.
- Developed reference to contexts.
- Range of (complex) literary terms and concepts.
- Secure understanding of details of the play.
- Successfully embedded quotations.
- Meaningful reference to tragedy.
- Close analysis of quotation, especially the word 'distortion'.

4 A: The argument becomes more subtle and opens up a sensible, balanced critical discussion.

B: Adopts a formal expression appropriate for an academic essay.

C: Embedded and contextualised quotations.

D: Clear focus on the quotations (commands and the critical description); reference to context; links to the wider concerns of the play.

5 Answers will vary.

6 Answers will vary.