

Benjamin Verge

## Playscript Analysis (The Glass Menagerie)

**Thoughts on the play:** I liked the play. I liked the fact that Tennessee Williams gives the reader and potential director clear instructions on how the play should look and feel. I believe it touched on a real-life scenario and even people today could relate too.

### 1. Where are they?

- a. They were St. Louis, Missouri in an apartment complex.
- b. It was a poor neighborhood.
- c. They were living like that because Tom was the only one working in the house, their father abandoned them, Laura quit school, and Amanda was not working.

### 2. When are they?

- a. It was a memory play or flashback from 1937. The play had memories from different times of the day.
- b. They made no specific notes about when they are.
- c. There is no special significance.

### 3. Who are they?

#### Characters

- a. **Tom Wingfield-** He is the main character and narrator. Tom is the son of Amanda and Mr. Wingfield. He is the brother of Laura and friend of Jim. He is adventurous, frustrated, desperate, and hardworking. He is a shoe warehouse worker and an aspiring poet. He is the only person who has an income in the house
- b. **Amanda Wingfield-** She is the abandoned wife of Mr. Wingfield and the mother to Tom and Laura. She is a bitter, middle-aged woman who is obsessed with her past life. She is not working and tries to be controlling over her grown kids. She can come off as both selfish and selfless because she cares about her kids but only wants them to do things her way. Also, she is desperate to get someone to marry her daughter.
- c. **Laura Wingfield-** She is the daughter of Amanda and Mr. Wingfield and older sister of Tom. She is fragile and ashamed because she has pleurosis. This disease caused her to have a bad leg and she walks with a limp. She quit business school and is a collector of glass menageries. She identifies with the unicorn, her prize possession, most of all.
- d. **Jim O'Connor-** He is an old family friend, a shipping clerk at Tom's job, former popular high school athlete, and an old high school crush of Laura.
- e. **Mr. Wingfield-** He is the father of Tom and Laura and husband (or ex-husband) to Amanda. He wasn't involved as a live person in the play, but his picture still sits on their wall. He abandoned the family years before the play even began.

#### 4. What happened before?

I think that each person in the apartment was affected differently because of the abandonment they suffered from their negligent father/husband, Mr. Wingfield. Amanda, his wife, lost her spirits after he left. She constantly lived in the past and unintentionally treated her children terribly because of the pain she was suffering. Tom deferred his dreams of being an entertainer and poet because he felt like he had to be the man of the house and work to pay the bills. Laura never really had a relationship with the father, but a daughter/father relationship is very much important for her psyche.

#### 5. What is the function of each character in the play?

- a. Amanda Wingfield is the **antagonist** in the play because her mistreatment of children and selfishness. She forced Tom into the role of provider by making him feel responsible for the upkeep of his sister and mother alike and pay the bills of their household. She said she wished her kids were “normal” and blocked Tom from being himself by confining him to the warehouse job, but he ultimately got fed up and left.
- b. Both Tom and Laura could be viewed as the **protagonist** of the play depending on which view you are looking at and how you see the story. I looked at it through Tom’s eyes instead of the overall play. He is the main character and we are watching his memories while he narrates. I believe that he felt irritated and defeated for most of the story but triumphed over his controlling mother and finally left to pursue his own dreams and aspirations. He was ultimately the hero of his own story.
- c. Functions of the secondary characters are written in number three.

#### 6. What kinds of dialogue do the characters speak?

- a. Their dialogue seems natural and realistic for the time period. They were easy to understand and literal for the most part. I did not get a poetic dialogue with this play.

#### 7. What happens in the play?

- a. Amanda, Tom and Laura’s mother, has always been disappointed that Laura wears a brace on her leg and is painfully shy due to pleurosis. Amanda feels that it plays a major part in why she does not attract any potential husbands. She enrolls Laura in a business college in hopes that she can eventually create an income for the household through a business career. Laura ended up dropping out of the class secretly because of her insecurities dealing with her leg. Amanda then coerces Tom into trying to find Laura a husband. Meanwhile, Tom, hates his warehouse job and often consumes liquor to hide his pain of defeat from dealing with his mother’s selfishness. Tom invited Jim, his coworker and old friend, to dinner per the request of his mother. When Laura learns of this, she finds out it was her from high school. When Jim arrives, Laura answers the door then walks

away, leaving Tom and Jim by themselves. The electricity ends up going out because Tom used that money to join the merchant marines. Laura refuses to eat dinner with the others because of a claimed illness. They light candles and Laura is forced to entertain in the living room while Amanda and Tom clean up from dinner. She tells him that she was infatuated with him in high school but was too shy to say anything. Next, Laura reminds him of the nickname he had given her, “Blue Roses”, in which he criticized her shyness and low self-esteem but praises her uniqueness. Laura then showed him her collection of glass menageries. Laura’s favorite glass animal, a unicorn, was her prize possession. They began dancing afterwards, but Jim accidentally knocks over the unicorn, breaking off its horn. Laura was surprisingly forgiving, noting that the unicorn is now just a regular horse. Jim then kisses her but draws back immediately and followed that with an apology. He was engaged but had got caught in the moment. Afterwards, even after the hurt, Laura offers him the broken unicorn. Amanda was excited about the possibility of someone wanting her daughter but was devastated when Jim quickly explains that he must leave because of an appointment with his fiancée. When Jim leaves, she becomes enraged and blamed the incident all on Tom even though he had no idea that Jim was engaged. The mother and son get into it bad and Amanda comforts her daughter afterwards. Towards the end he shares that not long after Jim’s visit, he gets fired from the shoe warehouse job and leaves Amanda and Laura behind to pursue his own dreams, but he never was able to leave behind guilty conscience for leaving his sister.

**8. What is the play’s theme?**

- a. The first one is that the family has a hard time accepting reality. They have yet to cope with the abandonment and constantly ignores it just to seem like a normal family.
- b. The next is that memory is a powerful thing, especially if they were traumatic and felt like nightmares. Each member of the house had trouble breaking away from those traumatic incidents and moving on with life. They had all yet to escape until Tom finally made his own way in life.
- c. One must choose themselves first in order to break away from self-inflicted oppression. It’s okay to pursue your own dreams so that you can live a happy life.