

DIGITAL THEATRE+

VIRTUAL LEARNING LESSON PLAN
DRAMA/THEATRE



A STREETCAR NAMED DESIRE

BY TENNESSEE WILLIAMS

LESSON PLAN LENGTH: 60 MINUTES

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LEARNING OBJECTIVES

By the end of this lesson, students will be able to:

- Explore a key scene from the play
- Form independent interpretations of a scene, using professional comments and analysis to evaluate those choices
- Understand the motivations of two key characters and broaden their understanding of the motivation behind the words they speak
- Develop a more nuanced understanding of characters' motivations avoiding over-simplifications and generalisations
- Consider, through extension tasks, the style and context of the play, including the use of music.

To teach this lesson, you will need the following resources:

- [*A Streetcar Named Desire: Chelsea Walker on Directing*](#)
- [*A Streetcar Named Desire: Kelly Gough on Playing Blanche*](#)
- [*A Streetcar Named Desire: Patrick Knowles on Playing Stanley*](#)
- [*A Streetcar Named Desire: Practical Workshop Guide*](#)
- [*Practitioners on Practice... On Sound Design: An Interview with Paul Arditti*](#)
- [*Tennessee Williams: A Concise Introduction*](#)

Plus:

- Paper and a pen
- Copies of Scene 10 from Blanche: “How about taking a swim...” to Stanley: “Ha –ha – ha!”

**Keeping students and teachers safe during remote education is essential. Please ensure any online platform you are using to communicate or coordinate with students is suitable for their age group and check privacy settings. For further information, see the [NSPCC guidance](#).*

For further resources to help you teach *A Streetcar Named Desire*, including a [Practical Workshop Guide](#), visit www.digitaltheatreplus.com

EXERCISE 1

INTERPRETING BLANCHE AND STANLEY

- Setting a three-minute timer, ask students to write down adjectives to complete the sentences, “Blanche is...” and “Stanley is”.
- Encourage answers beyond the obvious by asking for concise adjectives or phrases, for example, “Blanche is fragile”, “Stanley is emotionally inarticulate.”
- After the three minutes has elapsed, ask students to share (if in an online lesson) or write down (if working independently) justifications for their choices; making reference to the text.
- In an online learning context, you can immediately deal with misconceptions, asking students to extend their answers making more detailed references to specific moments in the play. Students working independently can submit their answers to you for feedback.



ESTIMATED TIME:
10 MINUTES

The aim of this exercise is for students to consider their instinctive reactions to these two characters. They can refer back to these notes at the end of the session to consider how and why their opinions and interpretations have changed.

EXERCISE 2

TRACKING POWER AND
TENSION

- Students should read Scene 10, using the copies you have provided. If working in an online situation, allocate short chronological chunks of the scene to pairs who can then read consecutively.
- Students working independently can read alone or recruit someone at home to read with them. Depending on the ability of your students, you may wish to shorten the extract, or allocate extracts to students in order to cover the full section suggested here.
- Highlight that this scene takes place with Blanche heavily under the influence of alcohol, whilst Stanley is awaiting the imminent birth of his son (Stella is in the hospital).
- Have your students 'action' the text, thinking carefully about the intention or objective of each character as they deliver their lines. These should be stated as active verbs, such as, 'to enquire', 'to provoke', 'to intimidate', and written next to the dialogue in question. Not every sentence will have an intention, but students should become very aware of where the status/dominance shifts between the two characters.
- Students should now justify their choices and accompany their suggestions with a performance direction such as "they would need to stand at opposite ends of the space from each other moving slowly towards each other as they say...".
- This feedback can be given through guided discussion in an online lesson, or in writing (essay, annotated script or mind map depending on your students' ability) for electronic submission.



ESTIMATED TIME:
20 MINUTES

The aim of this exercise is to explore a key scene from the play and understand the complexities of the relationship between the two characters.

The motivations of each character will become clearer and will help students to appreciate the delicate changes between defence and attack on the part of both characters. It should elicit responses about the nuances of the two characters, which can then be supported by video interviews with creative practitioners.

EXERCISE 3

DIFFERING INTERPRETATIONS

ESTIMATED TIME:
30 MINUTES

- Students should watch the chapters listed from the following Digital Theatre+ resources, making careful notes as they watch:
 - *A Streetcar Named Desire: Chelsea Walker on Directing* - chapters entitled **Blanche** and **Stanley** (you may wish to set this interview as an extension activity if you feel your students would benefit from more discussion time.)
 - *A Streetcar Named Desire: Kelly Gough on Playing Blanche* – chapter entitled **Blanche**.
 - *A Streetcar Named Desire: Patrick Knowles on Playing Stanley* – chapter entitled **Stanley and Blanche**.

The aim of this exercise is to experience alternative interpretations of the characters from the point of view of a director and two actors involved in the 2018 Nuffield Southampton production.

Students can then review their original notes and ideas and evaluate them in the context of this new information.

Assignment/Discussion:

- In either written or discussion form, students should answer the following questions:
 - What words would you add and/or remove from your original list of adjectives used to describe Stanley and Blanche?
 - Return to your active verbs for the scene between Stanley and Blanche. Are there any verbs that you would change? Why? What was said in the video clips that has altered your ideas?

EXTRA TASKS

- To extend awareness of genre and context, students can watch the chapters of [Practitioners on Practice... On Sound Design: An Interview with Paul Arditti](#), entitled **Sound Design** and ***A Streetcar Named Desire***.
- Having watched the video sections, have your students create a playlist with one or more of the following headings:
 - A track (or tracks) without lyrics that could be used to underscore the scene between Stanley and Blanche in this lesson to heighten tension, create mood and atmosphere and control pace.
 - Music listened to by one particular character.
 - A playlist of each character's favourite songs.
 - Jazz relevant to the original period in which the play is set.
- If students wish to transpose the production to a different time period than the original, they should create a playlist which gives a clear indication of this new time period and/or location.

The estimated time required for these extension tasks can be set according to your knowledge of your specific students.

In this extension activity, students should become more aware of the expressionist element of the play and the way in which Tennessee Williams creates mood, atmosphere and insight for the audience through the use of music.

By asking students to justify their playlists, either in discussion or written form, they are extending their ability to consider their impact on an audience.

For further resources to help you teach *A Streetcar Named Desire*, including a **Practical Workshop Guide**, visit www.digitaltheatreplus.com

Want more resources to support your teaching? Discover thousands of engaging lesson materials from Digital Theatre+. Explore some of our most popular content by clicking the links below.

Cat on a Hot Tin Roof

By Tennessee Williams

Practical Workshop Guide

Tennessee Williams Concise Introduction

The Lively Arts BBC Documentary

Macbeth

By William Shakespeare

Everyman Theatre Production

Study Guide

Manga Shakespeare

Shakespeare In Your Space Workshop

Antigone

By Sophocles

BBC Production

Practical Workshop Guide

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Historical Context Workbook

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