

The glass menagerie

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The Glass Menagerie The Glass Menagerie, written in 1945 by Tennessee Williams, remains today as a great literary masterpiece. Williams gave unimaginable depth and uniqueness to each of his characters. Even though the play was written in the mid-forties it is timeless, in that the problems and troubles of the characters can be related to life today, more than 50 years later. The Glass Menagerie is a great play with a central theme of escape and many symbols to support this theme. In the following I will give a brief summary and discuss the theme. The Glass Menagerie begins with Tom introducing the play as a memory, his own memory of the past. At the start of the play the Wingfield family is eating dinner, after constant harassment on how to eat his food Tom leaves the table to go smoke a cigarette on the fire escape. Amanda tells Laura her story of the old days when she received seventeen gentlemen callers in one day. The next day Amanda finds out that Laura has dropped out of business school, and confronts her, Laura explains that she could not handle the class and has been out walking every day. Amanda sits down with Laura and asks if “ she ever liked a boy”?, Laura points to a picture in her yearbook. Later that evening Amanda and Tom argue, she does not understand why Tom goes to the movies every night. Tom states that he hates working for the family as he has been doing and leaves for the movies. He returns late that night drunk and after losing his key Laura opens the door for him. Tom tells her about the movie and of the magic show he had seen, giving her a scarf from the show. The next morning Amanda wakes Tom for work and asks him to bring home a gentlemen caller for Laura. Tom came home from work and announced that he had invited Jim O`connor to dinner the next day. When Jim comes for dinner Laura

recognizes him as the one she pointed out in the yearbook. Laura becomes sick and must excuse herself from the dinner table. After dinner Amanda tells Jim to keep Laura company in the parlor, at first Laura is scared but loosens up after some conversation. Jim ends up kissing Laura and regretting it after he announces that he is engaged. Amanda becomes angry with Tom for not telling of the engagement, Tom insists he did not know. Tom gets angry and leaves for good. Tom realizes at the end that he will never forget about his sister. The theme of this play is one of escape. The Wingfields live in poverty surviving day by day. Each character has their own way of escaping their harsh reality. One major symbol of escape is the fire escape. The fire escape gives Tom the opportunity to escape from his nagging mother and to collect his thoughts. The fire escape is a way out for Tom, but the others view it as a way in to their established reality. Another one of Tom's escapes is the movies. The movies show Tom a world where there is no nagging mothers or crippled sisters. The greatest symbol of his escape is when he pays for the merchant marines rather than the light bill. Laura escapes by using her glass collection. The glass collection is Laura's private world, set aside from reality where she is safe. When Amanda is heard coming up the fire escape Laura quickly hides the glass menagerie, as to keep her world a secret and to have something of her own. Like the glass menagerie Laura is also very fragile and easily hurt. Amanda's one true escape is remembering the old days, with all of her gentlemen callers. Tennessee Williams did a superb job separating each character and bringing them to life. The theme of escape shows us the desire and hope of these characters to have a better or maybe different life. I believe the underlying

message of this play is not to be in a dream world and work on your own reality.