

An analysis of the glass menagerie

[Literature](#), [Play](#)



The world is a very mysterious place with its constant advancements and how it is always evolving, but to some people this world may be considered a scary place. This fear of the outside world has the ability to make those who fear it unable to accept reality. In Tennessee Williams play *The Glass Menagerie*, the thought of accepting reality is especially hard for the Wingfield family, Laura, Tom, and Amanda, causing them to close themselves off each in their own unique way. The loss of reality seems to be furthest gone from the eldest child of the Wingfield family, Laura. Laura is a young woman with a brace on her leg causing her to walk with a limp. Her limp and medical condition ultimately leads her to have little to no self confidence which in turn makes her very socially awkward when interacting in public. Despite her efforts, Laura quit going to her business class, doesn't work, and doesn't go out of her home. The one thing that consumes Laura's life is her glass collection of animals. Laura interacts with her glass animals and gives them a whole life. To Laura these animals are her reality.

Whenever Laura does not feel comfortable she turns to this glass collection or she goes to the record player to escape from the reality. This exemplified when Jim, an old high school crush, comes over to dinner. When Jim first arrives Laura is too shy to answer the door and once he is in the house Laura becomes so nervous she becomes physically ill. Although she retreats to the records and stays on the couch while the others eat dinner; she is later accompanied by Jim. After a conversation, Jim and Laura dance around the room but Jim knocks over her glass unicorn breaking off the horn. At this point Laura finally breaks through her insecurities and almost accepts reality. Laura is not upset by this and tells Jim " now he is a normal horse, " but she

slips right back into her fantasy world by saying " I will just pretend that he had a surgery to have his horn removed, " proving that she is living in a world where her glass animals have lives and interactions, (37). Laura's use of her glass collection may be seen as a connection to herself in the sense that she too is fragile and delicate. Although Laura cares for her collection of animals she uses them to escape from the real world around her. One thing that could be worse for Laura's case and loss of reality is her mother, Amanda's, inability to accept her children's reality. Although Amanda is able to function well in social settings and is driven by the hopes of success for her children; she has a hard time accepting the reality that Laura is not social able to the men suitors like Amanda was when she was younger or that her son, Tom, is not a wealthy businessman. Amanda spends her days in the house as a caller for a magazine looking for a proper man for Laura but often gets lost in daydreams about her past as a wealthy southern bell. At night Amanda stands on the fire escape and tells Laura to wish on the " Silver Slipper for good fortune and love, " the Silver Slipper is in reality the moon but to Amanda it symbolizes a hope for a better future (25). She dreams of success for her and her family but cannot come to cope with the idea that Tom leaves the house every night and comes home drunk instead of making a proper living for her and Laura. Amanda is slightly connected to reality in the sense that unlike Laura, she can function properly out in public, but she cannot seem to let go of the past making her fantasies about wealth, social standing, and love her own reality. Amanda places a great deal of pressure on Tom to provide for the family, but Tom's idea of reality is escaping to the movies and drinking. Tom's loss of reality is also different

from Laura's and Amanda's. Tom is able to hold a job and function well in interactions with others. The loss of reality for Tom comes in when he leaves down the fire escape every night. Tom would rather go get drunk, see a movie, or read a piece of literature than work to succeed or pursue any friendships or relationships. Tom stumbles in the house most nights after seeing a movie or in one particular case, a magician. After seeing the magician Tom explains to Laura how he was amazed how he was able to escape the coffin without loosening any nails. This is a parallel to Tom's own life and how he would like to escape the house, which he considers to be his coffin, and so he can stop living through movies. Tom has the ability to accept reality but instead he chooses to escape the reality of his home life and job with the use of alcohol, literature and movies. Laura, Amanda, and Tom all exemplify their fear of the real world through glass collections, a past life and dreams, and alcohol, movies, and literature. Tennessee Williams uses his characters in *The Glass Menagerie* to show that there is a fear of the outside world and that sometimes people lose the touch of reality and make up their own fantasy world in order to escape that fear. WORKS CITED: Williams, Tennessee. *The Glass Menagerie*. New York/ St. Louis: Random House, 1945. Print.