

How blanche dubois is portrayed in scene 6

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The protagonist of *A Streetcar Named Desire*, Blanche Dubois, is a fallen southern Belle whose troubled life results in the deterioration of her mental health. She has just returned from a date with Mitch and their conversation turns to her past. This topic is extremely important in shaping our understanding of Blanche as a character; her present circumstances, as well as the way she acts in the play, are very strongly influenced by her past. Through carefully chosen language and key symbols, Williams highlights several aspects of this in scene 6.

Blanche begins by asserting ‘You have a great capacity for devotion’, which could either be construed as perceptive and an indication of how well she is getting to know Mitch, or as manipulative flattery, attempting to draw attention to his need for her. Williams reinforces the latter through her next question: ‘You will be lonely when she passes on, won’t you?’. The syntax of this sentence, a statement followed by a question, seems leading and manipulative; Blanche clearly wants him to believe that he will be lonely so that he pursues her more urgently, perhaps more out of her need for his provision and stability than out of love and desire for him.

When describing her discovery of love, Blanche metaphorically compares it to a ‘blinding light’, and later a ‘searchlight’. The symbol of light is drawn attention to repeatedly throughout the play, often representing uncovering, or revelation. In this case, however, it seems to be symbolic of sexuality and love; she states it had ‘always been half in shadow’ and after Allan’s death was gone, leaving no light ‘stronger than this – kitchen – candle’. This suggests that her relationship with Allan was her only experience of love, and that all that she has been involved in since has been a mere shadow of

what they shared. There are also many negative connotations of the phrase 'blinding light': it comes across as painful and dangerous. Williams could be suggesting that the passion of her love for Allan made her blind to other important parts of life, such as family, and perhaps also to his homosexuality. Earlier on in the play, Blanche is described as 'a moth', which gives greater significance to the idea of light; it attracts moths, but often kills them. This implies that a relationship with Allan was irresistible to her, but perhaps was the catalyst for the deterioration of her social life and sanity. This theme of destruction by one's own tendencies is one which is common in modern tragedies, which *A Streetcar Named Desire* arguably exemplifies.

Blanche describes herself as 'deluded' in her love for Allan. This adjective has connotations of not only ignorance (in this case of Allan's homosexuality), but also of self-deception. This aptly describes Blanche's attitude to many aspects of her life, such as her relationship with Mitch and, even more seriously, her fictional relationship with Shep Huntleigh. Williams therefore conveys to the audience Blanche's tendency to be optimistic, to the point where she is blind to the problems in her life.

By littering Blanche's speech with emotive language such as 'help', 'unendurably' and 'disgust', as well as by using exclamation marks, Williams conveys the strength of Blanche's emotions and of her recollections.

This is also highlighted by the graphic description of Allan's death: 'He'd stuck the revolver into his mouth, and fired – so that the back of his head had been – blown away!' As this sentence is followed by a pause, it comes

across as extremely abrupt, as well as coarse; both highlight how damaged Blanche has been by these words. In particular, the verbs ‘stuck’, ‘fired’ and ‘blown’ come across as very brutal, highlighting the insensitivity of those who said this in Blanche’s hearing, evoking sympathy for her from the audience.

Williams also explores Blanche’s character through the symbol of the Varsouviana, a polka ‘in a minor key’. Blanche reveals that this is the song which they were playing when Allan, her young husband, died and it is clear that she associates the song with this event, particularly with the gunshot that signified his suicide, as shown by the fact that it ‘stops abruptly’ when she mentions the shot. The Varsouviana is therefore linked with the regret she feels towards her past, as well as with the emotional damage she received from hearing the shot that killed her husband. The Polka tune seems to be affected by Mitch, however, as it stops when he ‘kisses her forehead’ and at other points in the play when he enters. This could suggest that Mitch represents hope for the future for Blanche and so drives away her regrets and emotional damage.

In conclusion, in scene 6, Blanche is presented as manipulative but also damaged woman who yearns for attention, perhaps as a result of the pain of her past.