

# Good essay on the glass menagerie

[Literature](#), [Books](#)



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## **Introduction**

The book, the glass menagerie, is an interesting read that encompasses and represents the lives of human beings who are torn between the world of reality and of fantasy. Therefore, it becomes imperative to discuss the storyline of the book and its connection to psychological theories. The book is filled with puzzling events that are more symbolic than real happenings. Just like the title describes it, the glass menagerie is a fanciful and fragile world in which the book's characters live in. the book centers around three characters, namely, Tom, Jim, Amanda and Laura. Each of these characters is lost in their fantasy world and reality is violently thrust upon them. Ironically, Tom and Amanda are more inclined to fantasy than compared to Laura (Williams, 2011).

In order to understand the perspectives of the characters in the book, the best theory that describes the character's situation is the psychoanalytic theory. This theory was first introduced in by Sigmund Freud, in the late 19th

century, who sought to understand the behavior of his mentally challenged patients. The psychoanalytic theory focuses on childhood events and their influence in behavior in an individual's adult life. Sigmund indicated there is a strong correlation of childhood events and the unconscious desires that are later seen in the individual's adult life (Diem-Wille, 2011).

As a psychologist, I will endeavor to understand the behaviors of the characters in this book, especially, Laura, as the plot revolves around her. This analysis will seek to understand the glass concept that is popular in the book, to Laura's life.

### **Laura, the central character of the book**

Laura is a rare piece of gem and has a physical and emotional disorder. This state has made Laura to become painfully shy throughout her young life. She attends the same high school, as her shining knight, Jim. As a result of her shy nature, she is not able to confess to him of her feelings for him.

However, Jim is kind to her and nicknames her, Blue Rose. This title is well fitting for her, just like the rare and alluring nature of the blue rose. However, this beauty does not come out as her shy nature stops the light from shining. This situation is discussed widely in Burke's work (pg 33) as he indicates that human nature is affected greatly by childhood events as well as external stimuli that ultimately affect behavior. Following this description, one can deduce that Laura's environment further culminated her situation. This situation follows Amanda's storytelling of her heydays when she was a Southern belle with a line of suitors. As a result, Laura feels like she will grow to be an old maid hence her withdrawn nature.

Furthermore, this approach is also adopted by Collin (pg 27) who also

indicates that an individual's background has a big impact in social and emotional development. The lonesome state of the Whitfield family further progresses the situation.

### **Literary style**

The book is richly endowed with metaphors and is filled with symbolism. One of these symbols is the glass menagerie that also forms the title of the book. Glass in nature is fragile and if not handled with care, will break. Amanda and Laura are enthusiasts of glass as their glass collections are cherished by the two individuals. They hold on to fantasies and do not succumb to reality living. For instance, Laura has her most valuable item, a glass unicorn. The form of a unicorn is unique as it is different from the ordinary horse. This symbol represents her completely as she is also different from other girls, just like a unicorn and is also fragile, as in the glass form of the unicorn. This state is also described by Hersen (pg 67) who indicates that individuals seek solace in material representations which they deem to represent their personalities and can easily relate with. Amanda, on the other hand, has a glass piece which is eventually broken by Tom in the course of their argument.

### **Theme of escapism**

All characters in the book long to escape and fulfill their fantasies. As indicated above, the characters are torn between reality and fantasy and tend to linger more on the latter than the former. Tuan (pg 16) defines escapism as the engagement of fantasy in an attempt to escape unpleasant realities. For instance, Tom spends his time in the movies and enjoys literary

arts in an attempt to escape the bad reality that haunts him every day. He hates his job at the shoe factory and he feels his family's situation holds him back from living the life he fantasizes about. Singer (pg 55) indicates that the need to hold on to fantasies is a brain mechanism that seeks to hide unpleasant events that may happen in the course of one's life and instead replace the mind with more pleasant events.

The narrative is based on the author's own experience who takes on a double role of being narrator and character at the same time. Furthermore, the book is based on a different social setting that is different from the one Amanda had when she was growing up as social distinction is no longer of importance in the social structure.

## **Conclusion**

In connection to the psychoanalytic theory described above, it is evident that the characters in the book are trying to escape from harsh realities that confront them. Tom escapes by way of movies and his interest in the arts while Laura and Amanda escape in the glass merchandize they treasure. Mlodinow (pg 66) further includes the aspect of the unconscious mind in the exploration of the fantasies the above characters try to hold on to.

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