

# Free essay on the glass menagerie: understanding a life of reality and aspiration...

[Family](#), [Parents](#)



The play by Tennessee Williams portrays the time of 1930s in America through the recollection of Tom, the protagonist. He goes on to say that had secluded the family long ago and they were all left to fend for themselves. Tom declares in the beginning of the play, “ I give you truth in the pleasant disguise of illusion.” (Williams, 1. 1) In the play, the audience first finds Tom having dinner with the other members of his family, Amanda and his sister Laura. Their mother opines that she wishes her daughter to have “ gentlemen callers” like she used to have before at the time when she used to be a Southern Belle.

Laura talks of a person named Jim for whom she had a soft corner in her schooldays. She also shows conspicuous traits of having obsession with the glass menagerie. She angers her mother as she drops out of her typing class being too shy for public interaction. Tom is portrayed as a longing soul who wishes to delve deep into the blissful realm of the ideal world. He finds an escapist route through reading, drinking and watching movies at the theatres. This pertinently exasperates her mother who urges him to be responsible. It is on her mother’s persuasion that Tom brings Jim to the house as a caller. Laura, exuberant at first, feels shy when she gets to know its Jim. However, she finally accumulates the courage to open up only to be hurt at knowing that Jim is engaged. She is left shattered and Amanda endeavors to console her bruised emotions. Soon after, Tom abandons his family only to be haunted all his life by the memories of a lovable sister whom he left behind. He is left with the simmering feeling of remorse. The entire play is shrouded with the theme of confinement. He says, “ House, house! Who pays rent on it, who makes a slave of himself to—”

(Williams, 3. 17) Tom feels confined in the sphere of an unfulfilling job and the mundane walls of his home from where he wishes to escape. He envisages a journey to explore the world with his adventurous spirit. Amanda too is left to ponder about her glorious past and is confined in that realm of twisted time. Laura remains within her shell in her own world of glass menagerie.

The play investigates the dichotomy of duty and aspirations and choosing one over the other will obviously mean leaving behind the other. The story is a quest for finding solace to the soul through the endeavor of reconciliation of duty and desire, something which seems impossible. Williams explores the dynamics of a family in *The Glass Menagerie* and delves deep into the relationships.

The play embarks upon exploring the memory of the protagonist. He is reminiscent of the olden times when he lived with his family. He is now all alone and his physical emancipation is futile as his mind is shrouded with the memory of his loved ones, whom he can never forget. He is simply on a quest for happiness, but his pursuit has been in vain. Laura really needed her brother to be there by her side as she was extremely fragile, just as the glass menagerie of her collection. Her shyness finds root in her physical anomaly of being crippled. Her vulnerability is never nurtured and she is left in her world of immanence to be lost in life.

The play goes on to describe how human beings fabricate a world of their own to be oblivious of the obvious reality. Amanda reprimands her son in the play saying, " I'll tell you what I wished for on the moon. Success and happiness for my precious children! " (Williams, 5. 23) Amanda fails to come

to terms with the fact that her son is a writer and her daughter is crippled.

She wishes to see her children fulfill the classic American Dream.

Moreover, the societal view of marriage and gender roles is apparent in the play. These norms dictate the values and the goals in life. Amanda opines, " I know so well what becomes of unmarried woman who aren't prepared to occupy a position." (Williams, 2. 34) Tom, however, defies the normative course of action and tries to fulfill the dreams he has nurtured in the core of his heart.

Thus, the playwright aptly portrays the intricacies of life and explores the path of finding happiness. Tom goes on to leave his family in search of the Pandora's Box, but his thirst is never satiated being guilt-ridden with the memories of his beloved sister. He comprehends that although the path of escapism has led him to another realm of life where he is emancipated from the constrictions of family life, he has not found the bliss for his soul.

## **Works Cited**

Williams, Tennessee. *The Glass Menagerie*. New York: New Directions Publishing Corporation, 1945. Print.

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