

A person's past  
transgressions will  
haunt his future.

[Art & Culture](#), [Music](#)



Name Course Instructor Date Theme: A person's past transgressions will haunt his future. The books *Babylon Revisited* by F.

Scott Fitzgerald and *A Streetcar Named Desire* by Tennessee Williams are fundamental resources in the study of literature. The books have made extensive use of literary devices that are applied to make the stories intriguing and understandable. *Babylon Revisited* tells a tale of a man Charlie who has made serious transgressions in the past on a mission to correct the mistakes he made. He therefore embarks on changing the mentality of his sister in law, father the child he had abandoned and all the while dealing with alcoholism. *A Streetcar Named Desire* is a story of a woman named Blanche who has a dark past that determines her future. Her past liaisons and activities catch up with her when she moves in with her sister because of financial constraints. Her new life proves the inevitability of her past activities and she is finally admitted to a mental institution.

Both these books represent the theme that a person's past transgressions will haunt future aspirations. The main themes in the stories are applied with the use of literary devices such as symbolism, imagery, point of view, characters, setting and structure. Symbolism is used by both authors to show the past of the major characters.

In *A Streetcar Named Desire*, Blanche describes her former husband, Allan and states falling in love as You suddenly turned a blinding light on something that had always been Half in shadow, that's how he struck the world for me (Williams 2356). The shadow was symbolic of the manner in which her husband had hidden his homosexuality only to her realization later

on in their marriage. Her memories take her back to when she openly disclosed his sexuality that led to his suicide. Similarly, symbolism is also used in *Babylon Revisited* as Charlie reminisces on his losses with Paul. Paul tells him “ I heard you lost a lot in the crash -I did” (Fitzgerald, 2210). Charles agrees as this crush symbolizes Charlie's turning point in life. Through the crush that he lost everything he valued in terms of wealth, his daughter and his lifestyle.

He had to lose his wealth in order to regain the value of non-material things that matter in life. Therefore, both books show the past of the main characters and their life changing events. Authors implement the element of setting to create a connection between the characters and events in a story.

Fitzgerald and Williams apply distinct settings to bring out the theme. The setting of *Babylon Revisited* is established in Paris in 1930 after the period of the stock market crash of 1929. The 1920s was a decade that was marked with drinking, partying and jazz music popularly known as “ the roaring 20s.” It is also in this period that Charlie lived the lifestyle of adventure and alcoholism. He returns to Paris in the 1930s when the party period is over. He looks back at his debauchery with a different perspective. His alcoholism becomes the cause of his separation with his child Honoria. His attempts to live with her prove unsuccessful as his sister in law still judges him with his past lifestyle.

Williams also uses the setting of the 1940s and the social context in that period. This period had conflicting race and class relations. Blanche exemplifies her prejudices to the Kowalski home.

Class distinctions are clear between her family and that of Stanly Kowalski who is her sister's husband. The setting of the play also shows that Stella and Stanly are not wealthy. This setting is distinct from the lifestyle Blanche lived before she visited her sister. However, because of her past lifestyle, spending habits and sexual activity she loses her property and job. Ultimately, her endeavors lead her to poverty. Fitzgerald and Williams use different settings to give a clear description of the past of the characters.

However, Fitzgerald employs a setting that relates to the life of Charles. The narrator point of view offers a specific view of the story or an event to give further explanation to the story. Even though most works of literature offer the narrator's point of view, Williams does not have a narrative voice.

The story does not introduce a narrator through whom the story can be explained. However, Fitzgerald uses third person to narrate the story of Charles. There is a clear distinction between Charlie and the narrator. The narration therefore shows different perspectives between Charlie and the narrator. Through this element, Charlie's life is analyzed from the past to the present. From his previous lifestyle, the narrator point of view explains why Charles is having difficulty in convincing people he has changed to become more responsible (Fitzgerald 2212).

This process proves to be tedious for him because they hinder him from living with his daughter. The tone used in both books refers to the previous events and actions of the main characters in a nostalgic tone. Both Charlie and Blanche are disgusted and ashamed by their past. Charlie lived an extravagant lifestyle of recklessness, parties and drinking. He also

remembers locking his wife outside the house during a snowstorm. His sister in law continuously reminds him and blames him for her death. His regrets are clear as he attempts to reestablish himself but faces numerous challenges, as people are not aware that he has changed.

On the other hand, Blanche is so ashamed of her former life that she keeps it secret. She hides her sexual liaisons from Mitch even though she is interested in him. However, Stanley reveals the truth in a nostalgic manner and in front of everyone including Mitch. Consequently, Mitch is disgusted with her past and vows never to marry her. Characters are important in any work of literature. The characters in *A Street Car Named Desire* and *Babylon Revisited* are instrumental in understanding the lives of Charles and Blanche. Williams uses the character of Stanley to reveal the terrible past of Blanche. Through his revelation, the theme that a person's past evils will catch up with them is manifested.

Mitch, her lover, pictures her as a conservative woman but with knowledge of her sexual tendencies, he sees her true personality. Blanche is raped and ultimately admitted to a mental hospital. Marion Peters is pictured as a protagonist in Charles' attempts to reestablish himself. She is the character that is a constant reminder to the activities he engaged in previously. She does not make it easy for his aspirations in his new course in life. She is the main force that drives the main theme.

She claims to understand Charlie's need to be with his daughter but she does not show her sympathy. Charles is finally unable to live with his daughter Honoria. In conclusion, both Fitzgerald and Williams clearly

highlight the theme that past transgressions will always catch up with the transgressor. The use of literary devices further improves the understanding of the reader. Both books are essential in the study of literature. Elements such as character, symbolism, point of view and setting are extensively employed in both books.

Therefore, these elements portray the main theme that is clearly depicted throughout the plot in both books. Work cited Fitzgerald, Scott. " Babylon Revisited." The Norton Anthology of American Literature.

Ed. Nina Baym, New York: Norton, 2007. 2201-2215. Print.

Williams, Tennessee. " A Streetcar Named Desire." The Norton Anthology of American Literature. Ed. Nina Baym, New York: Norton, 2007.

2337-2398. Print.