

By paying close attention to detail, describe how Williams creates tension on the...



The Glass Menagerie is a play that deals with a strong mix of emotions, including sadness, loneliness, anger and pride. This is especially true for the character of Tom. Williams uses many different ways of portraying Tom's feelings, and these become apparent when reading the play. I think one of the most important factors in the play is the role of the absent father. The fact that Williams chose to have his picture hanging in the family's living room through the entire play brings an underlying atmosphere, which is always present.

Because of his father's absence Tom feels a huge amount of pressure upon him this is due to a number of reasons. Firstly, Amanda can be very overbearing this causes Tom to be annoyed. Her constant 'nagging' and fussing and his sister can be very hard to bear and brings a great deal of tension to the household, so why is Amanda like that? Like many mothers, she has certain ideas of what she wants for her children. Memories of her own youth and her past life in Blue Mountain and give Amanda determination to force Laura into the same way of life.

But because of the lack of 'gentlemen callers' for Laura, there is an atmosphere of both disappointment and unrealistic hope that is very obvious to Tom, "he is the long delayed but always expected something that we live for. (Scene one, lines 32 to 33). Williams also creates tension when Amanda focuses her attention on her so she knows that Tom is unhappy, but instead of helping him she decides to "turn a blind eye" and act as though he is going through a phase. But deep down she is terrified that he is turning into his father, "I see you taking after his ways! (Scene 4, line 134). She also makes him promise that he will never turn out to be an alcoholic.

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This puts Tom under enormous expectation. Both Amanda and Laura know that he could easily leave them in the same way his own father did. Does Tom want to leave? It is a fair comment to say that he is longing to escape from his life in St. Louis. This is obvious to his mother and sister, and Amanda even says “ you hate the apartment and that you go out at nights to get away from it! (Scene 4, lines137-138).

We never actually see where Tom goes at night, which is a way that the playwright adds mystery and a hidden side to Tom’s character. One thing that is dear about Tom is his feelings for Laura. He cares for her deeply, which makes his personal ordeal harder to bear. He wants to leave home very much, yet he feels a tremendous amount of guilt about abandoning his sister. The symbolism of the glass ornaments collection sums this situation up perfectly.

Like the glass, Laura is very fragile and can easily be broken. In Scene three, he bumps into her collection causing some of it to break. This upsets Laura, which make Tom feel awful. He did not do it on purpose but he knows that if he leaves, it will have the same effect on her. He feels sorry for Laura, partly because of her slight disability but mainly due to the constant fussing she gets from his mother. Tennessee Williams was from Southern America, and therefore had an insider’s account on how life was.

The play is set in St Louis which is, although not in the deep South, a typical southern town with southern values. Being mainly right-wing part of America means that certain qualities. A young man like Tom should be dating respectable, pretty young ladies whilst working his way to promotion at his

job. However, Tom shows no interest in the warehouse or women, but only in the movies (where he claims that he goes every night); writing poems and adventure.