

Analysis of scene one
of 'a streetcar named
desire' by tennessee
williams essay s...



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Williams' begins the scene with a description of New Orleans' Elysian Fields; the town in which it is set. It seems old and slightly poor which begs the audience to ask the question ' why?' as America during the 1950's was known for its stability and its economic boom in which all areas of America were invested in. So had this town been neglected, is it that cut off from mainstream America? The section is described as having a ' raffish charm' unlike most other American cities - Williams uses this to suggest a more casual lifestyle in Elysian Fields. Williams uses the conversation between the Negro woman and Eunice to show that racial ethnicities mix easily in Elysian Fields, strange for 1950's America during which racial segregation was the norm and the fight for racial equality had just started. Williams is trying to convey that the place in which the play is set is unlike any other place in America, a place where formalities are nearly all forgotten. The ' blue piano' is introduced here and is used throughout the scene. It is clearly an important part to the play as a whole and is used to set the tone for the town. The term ' blue' is often used to describe sadness within someone.

New Orleans is the town of jazz, where mainstream jazz was born - the blue piano could be indicative of the town's jazz roots and therefore an apt way for Williams to describe the atmosphere for the scene. Playing blues on the piano could indicate a sad ending for the play, almost a forewarning for the audience that not all endings are happy. Williams' use of the ' blue piano' in tense, sad or uncomfortable moments in the scene emphasises the characters emotions and adds dramatic flair to the scene. Williams' dialogue in the first scene really introduces his characters at their most honest stage. Their reactions to each other reveal to the audience their most key traits and

Williams' descriptions of them hint at their upbringings. Their gestures and actions indicate to the audience how they feel towards other characters and his descriptions of the characters give the audience insight into their history. Stanley in scene one is introduced as a man about thirty years old, 'roughly dressed' - this gives him a very common air, a very normal man without many riches, someone who works hard for a living.

His very first moment with Stella, his wife, we get to see, is him shouting for her and throwing a chunk of meat at her without even pausing to see if she caught it or to apologise for his behaviour. This gives him a very brutish manner about him and it is clear he is no gentleman. He also doesn't really bother to tell Stella where he is going until she asks him; to the audience he is seen as a man who is not thoughtful towards his wife's feelings and her plans. His idiolect suggests that he was born and bred in America, despite him being Polish, but has some 1950's slang so that he isn't particularly well spoken and perhaps has a particular accent as he doesn't quite pronounce all his T's 'My clothes're stickin' to me'. Williams' long character description of Stanley later on in the first scene gives the audience an insight into Stanley's life before the scene. His physical description is that of an attractive man, five ft eight inches, 'strongly, compactly built'. It shows the audience he is a man a lot of women would want.

Williams' continues on to describe Stanley's attitude to women being much like 'a richly feathered male bird among hens' hinting that Stanley's experience with women is extensive and that he is no stranger to the attention of a female. Stanley is described as having an air of 'animal joy' about him - this illuminates his bestial mannerisms and perhaps suggests <https://assignbuster.com/analysis-of-scene-one-of-a-streetcar-named-desire-by-tennessee-williams-essay-sample/>

the way he treats Stella is both crude and inhumane. He is described as a man who is very much representative of the entire male species of human and very normal in that he loves 'good food and drink and games, his car, his radio' Williams concludes his description of Stanley with reference to Stanley's attitude towards women stating clearly that he is a man who judges on looks 'with sexual reference, crude images flashing into his mind' and this determines the way he treats them. The way Stanley treats Blanche, Stella's sister, in the first scene is with some respect, as much as the audience can expect from a man such as Stanley. This could suggest that Stanley finds Blanche attractive. Stanley however catches onto Blanche's drinking which makes things uncomfortable between the two of them.

Stanley's motto is 'Be comfortable' which suggests that he hasn't got much patience for things which make him uncomfortable, like having a sister-in-law over for a long while. Stanley takes off his shirt in front of Blanche showing he hasn't got much in the way of shame or humility. Stanley describes himself as 'unrefined' to Blanche - this is almost a perfect word for the boyish husband bowling champion. When he addresses Stella, it isn't without much thought as to why Stella is upset, again showing the audience the way he can sometimes be oafish and hints that she is in love with him far more than he is with her. Stella in the first scene is first introduced when Stanley throws the meat package at her. Williams makes it clear that she is a 'gentle woman about twenty-five and of a background obviously quite different from her husband's'. Her reaction to Stanley's wild manner is almost nonchalant in a way that signifies it is usual for her to be treated in such a way. This suggests a tolerance in Stella second to none and perhaps a

love for her husband too deep she doesn't even notice the way he doesn't care much about her. The audience instantly becomes sympathetic towards Stella.

Stella's short conversation with Eunice shows she has a concern for her friends and is a polite and well mannered woman making it evident of her background. The way Stella has to catch up to Stanley as he makes his way to the bowling alley with his friend Mitch is perhaps a symbolic way for Williams to introduce the nature of Stella and Stanley's relationship ; her chasing him, and him with his back to her not caring whether she comes or not. When Blanche arrives and Stella goes back home for her, it is apparent that she has sisterly concern for Blanche and loves her dearly: this endears Stella to the audience even further. Stella's reaction to Blanche shows that perhaps Stella is used to her sisters habits and is used to being slightly overshadowed by Blanche. It is also clear that Stella has been trained from a very early age on how to keep her sister happy which is seen through Williams' descriptions ' dutifully: they haven't slipped one particle.' Stella says in response to Blanche's anxiety of her looks. In response to Blanche's criticism of her home, Stella shows she is content where she is, happy in the condition she lives in and it is suddenly plain to the audience that she means it and her love of Stanley must be very strong in order for her to prefer her current state of living to her previous which is unmistakably a lavish home called Belle Reve.

Williams further emphasises Stella's love for Stanley through Stella explaining how she feels when Stanley leaves - how she breaks down when he finally comes home. Stella's idiolect is much like Blanche's however it is <https://assignbuster.com/analysis-of-scene-one-of-a-streetcar-named-desire-by-tennessee-williams-essay-sample/>

slightly less Southern indicating the time they have spent away from each other. When Stella finds out about Belle Reve being lost and Blanche practically attacks her for not being there, it is clear that Stella doesn't quite blame Blanche the way Blanche blames Stella for the loss. The shock of the loss of her childhood home coupled with Blanches onslaught cause Stella to cry and the audience feels bad for Stella, she doesn't deserve to be shouted at like that. From Blanches onslaught however, the audience learns that Stella left home ten years ago after their father died and never returned, leaving Blanche to face her entire families death bar Stella's on her own, go to the funerals and face the sorrow on her own. It gives Stella a certain type of rebelliousness about her which contrasts with the very gentle obedience that Williams has presented her with in the first scene. Williams' description of Blanche introduces her to the play as someone who doesn't fit in with her less than lavish surroundings, who is perhaps used to finery and comes from a privileged background.

Blanches reaction to Elysian fields and Stanley and Stella's home is used to illuminate Blanche's opinion of the area and shows the audience that Blanche is somewhat high and mighty and looks upon the situation with an air of superiority. Williams describes her as a 'moth' which suggests to the audience that Blanche seems delicate, fragile and ready to fly away at a moment's notice. Also, Williams draws reference to the fact that moths are often lead to their own destruction, the destruction being a flame of some sort. Perhaps here the audience are warned that Blanche may be leading herself to her own destruction as moths often do. As Eunice and the Negro Woman is talking to Blanche, Blanche pauses a lot in her speech: she is both

nervous at her current situation and wants to stop talking to Eunice and the Negro Woman. This indicates that maybe Blanche doesn't wish to associate with the other race or that she simply doesn't want to associate with people from this kind of neighbourhood, again showing the audience her superior attitude. Inside Stella's house, Williams describes Blanche as sitting 'very stiffly with her shoulders slightly hunched and her legs pressed close together' which seems to suggest she is uncomfortable with her situation but intends to see her visit through.

Through Blanche's reaction to finding whisky it is easily conceivable to the audience that Blanche has some sort of history with alcohol and needs some to steady herself for news she has yet to give. She tries to hide any evidence of her indulgence and when offered another drink she says she can only have one as it is her limit, knowing that she already has had one. Perhaps she wants to look in control of herself and her body however the most likely reason for Williams making a point of this is that he wants to make it clear that Blanche cares a lot about what people think about her. Until Blanche sees her sister, she seems detached from the audience, in her own world a world far from there's and there is nothing the audience can relate to with her just yet. Most of Blanche is a mystery to the audience until then. When Stella does arrive home, Blanches delighted reaction makes her love for her sister clear as day, calling her a pet name 'Oh Stella for Star!' and breaking out of her strange behaviour. Suddenly from not talking much, she turns to talking too much which Williams uses to illustrate that Blanche is used to being overbearing around her sister.

Blanche's vanity is a subject that Williams touches upon by Blanche fishing for compliments from her sister, taking comfort in the sound of her sister's appraisal of her beauty. She likes to talk about herself in a positive light only and likes to be the topic of conversation as long as it is about her beauty which she thinks very highly of. Blanche is used to being listened to and enjoys being the centre of attention - this is shown through Blanche's reaction to Stella admitting that she is only quite around Blanche, 'A good habit to get into...' Blanche seems critical about Stella and scrutinising 'You've put on some weight!' this is rude and can be seen as nervous talk but to the audience it appears as if Blanche likes to put her sister down on her looks so as to feel better about her own. Blanche is also controlling of Stella 'You hear me? I said stand up!' and this is indicative of her being obeyed her entire life by servants and maids at Belle Reve. When Blanche tells Stella about the loss of Belle Reve, she immediately turns the blame on Stella, not thinking about how it may affect Stella. This can be seen as a way to make excuses for her behaviour but also makes it clear that Blanche blames Stella for the loss of Belle Reve 'Where were you?

In bed with your - Polack!' Whilst Stella is in tears at the loss of her home and anger at her sister, Blanche is too self absorbed to notice until Stella leaves to wash her face: this shows the audience that Blanche is not as sensitive to her sister's feelings as Stella is about Blanche's. When Blanche finally meets Stanley, she is taken aback by his lack of concern for his wife and his appearance but it is clear that she is uncomfortable around him.

Other minor characters are introduced within the first scene such as Mitch; one of Stanley's closest friends who lives with his sick mother, indicative of

perhaps his loneliness but who still goes out with his friends. Eunice is introduced as a very kind woman who though she does not show the same kindness to her husband, worries about him and craves his attention which is shown by her shouting at him about wanting to know where he was. She is thoughtful and helps Blanche find her way to Stella's but takes offense when she is practically dismissed. Another odd thing about Eunice is that she talks freely to the Negro Woman as if they are good friends which suggest someone who values personality over looks.