**ENG 4U - *The Glass Menagerie* Discussion Questions**

**Scenes One**

1. Tom's opening speech sketches the social background of the play and introduces the main characters. What basic information does Tom provide in this speech about his family? About the gentleman caller? About the nature of the play itself?
2. In his opening monologue to the audience, Tom says that the stage magician “gives you illusion that has the appearance of truth, I give you truth in the pleasant disguise of illusion” What does he mean?
3. In Scene One, what indications are there that there is tension in the family? Who seems to cause the tension?
4. Amanda has closed her mind to the reality that Laura has no prospects for gentleman callers. Does Amanda want the callers for Laura or does she want them so that she can relive her own youth? Explain, using examples from the play.

**Scenes Two**

1. A play is put in motion by some element that upsets the situation at the beginning of the story. The element that sets this play in motion arrives in Scene Two. What is it? How does it upset the opening situation, and how does it set the play in motion?
2. In Scene Two, what does Laura say and do to reveal that she is "set apart" from the real world?
3. What is the significance of the "blue roses" that appear on the screen at the start of Scene Two?
4. At this point in the play, does Amanda seem to be a weak or a strong character? Does she arouse your sympathy, or do you think Williams wants you to dislike her? Explain.
5. How is it shown that the boy in the yearbook was important to Laura? Why doesn't Amanda seem particularly interested in this young man?
6. Few people have Laura's specific physical handicap. Do you think most people can identify with her? Why or why not?

**Scenes Three**

1. In Scene Two, Amanda is in conflict with Laura. Who is in conflict in Scene Three? What starts the conflict, and what is it about?
2. Each of the Wingfields escapes from unpleasant reality into a comforting, private world. In Scene One, Amanda escapes from her present circumstances by remembering and talking about her past youth, her beauty, and her romantic successes. How does Laura escape from the real world? What does Tom do to escape from his unhappiness?
3. What part does Laura play in the angry argument between Tom and Amanda?
4. How is Laura's relationship with Tom different from her relationship with Amanda? How can you tell that Tom is truly fond of Laura?
5. Amanda often refers to her absent husband, and his grinning picture is highlighted at various times during the play. What does the photograph represent to Amanda? To Tom? How is the photograph a constant threat to Amanda and Laura's survival?
6. The outburst of anger that ends Scene Three marks the emotional peak of the play so far. How has the playwright prepared you for Tom's anger and Amanda's accusations?

**Scenes Four, Five, and Six**

* 1. In Scenes Four and Five, Tom displays an attitude toward his mother that he has not shown before. Describe that attitude, and find the lines of dialogue that reveal it. Cite two lines of dialogue that show that Amanda is also trying to behave differently toward Tom.
  2. What does Amanda ask Tom to do at the end of Scene Four?
  3. In Scene Five, Tom gives his mother two realistic warnings to counter Amanda's pleasant fantasy of the gentleman caller. What are these warnings? How does Amanda react to them?
  4. How does Amanda transform herself for the gentleman caller? How is her attitude about their guest different from Laura's?
  5. What is Laura's reaction when she learns the identity of the gentleman caller? How does Amanda respond to this reaction?
  6. At the beginning of Scene Four, both Tom and Amanda try to make peace. Why do they begin to argue again?
  7. The basic **dramatic situation** from which a play can grow involves a person or persons whom viewers care about, who are in more or less desperate situations with a great deal at stake. Such characters decide to act and then actually take steps to achieve their "wants." Discuss how these dramatic elements are used up to this point in "The Glass Menagerie."
  8. In most plays, suspense is preferable to surprise. If a person reaches the top of a hill and looks down to see two trains at the moment they crash, it is a **surprise** and it is shocking. But dramatically, it would be more effective if, as the person neared the top of the hill, he saw the trains approaching each other on the same track from perhaps a mile apart. This would be **suspense.** How has Tennessee Williams used suspense in the play up to now?
  9. Amanda is a **complex character:** not easily described as either "good" or "bad." What aspect of her character do you see in Scenes Five and Six? Do you feel sympathetic toward her? Explain.
  10. What are your feelings for the gentleman caller at this point in the play? How do you feel about Tom?

**Scene Seven**

* 1. What does Williams achieve in the way of “theater poetry” by having Tom neglect to pay the light bill?
  2. What happens to make you think at first that Jim O’Connor’s visit may work out as Amanda hopes? Explain how the evening ends in disappointment for Laura and Amanda.
  3. The gentleman caller scene is a perfect little play within a play. Tell how the **basic dramatic elements** are used in this scene: characters you care about placed in a situation where much is at stake, taking steps to get what they want.
  4. One of the basic elements of drama is **progression,** or change. Trace the progression of the relationship between Jim and Laura in this scene.

* 1. Why does Laura say about the broken horn on the unicorn: “Maybe it’s a blessing in disguise”?
  2. What does Tom mean at the end when he talks about Laura blowing out her candles?