

The Glass Menagerie, Tennessee Williams' first major play to appear on Broadway is an autobiographical work. The play revolves around Amanda Wingfield and her two grown children- Tom and Laura, who live in a shabby St. Louis apartment during the depression (The Great Depression- Worldwide economic depression during the 1930s).

The events of the play are framed by Tom Wingfield's memory of his mother and sister, and what drove him to abandon them. He dreams of being a writer and living a life of adventure. Not only did his mother's nagging and his frail sister's idiosyncrasies make the apartment a depressing and oppressive place, but the monotonous job at the warehouse also stifled him. He longed to be free but was chained by his responsibilities towards Amanda and Laura. He strikes a deal with Amanda that if he finds a suitor for his sister, who would marry her and look after her, he would be free to leave. So Tom invites Jim O'Connor, the gentleman caller to dinner one evening.

The play ends unhappily, for the Gentleman Caller is already engaged, so Amanda's hopes for a husband for Laura are smashed. Tom runs away to join the merchant marine but is unable to escape the memory of his sister. The burden of the past remains with Tom, wherever he is, just as for the author: Williams' sister Rose and her mental problem were a constant, painful memory as well as a source of inspiration.

Escape.

One of the major themes of the play is the human tendency to escape brutal realities and the difficulty of the characters to accept and deal with their lives. Escape from responsibility, reality, and life in general is the central theme of the play. EVERYONE in the Wingfield family has jumped onto the escape from reality bandwagon- which is getting pretty crowded. They live in denial, blindness and self delusion in their own different ways. Of the three Wingfields, the one who finds it most difficult to get a grasp on reality is Laura. She magnifies her disability and lets it affect her personality. She is extremely shy and introverted and finds ordinary human relationships almost unbearable. She runs off to a world populated by glass animals- objects that like Laura's inner life are incredibly fanciful and dangerously delicate. Her introversion grows to such an extent that she is fearful of confronting and having regular conversations with people. Unlike his sister, Tom is capable of functioning in the real world- he can hold down a job and talk to strangers but he too, wishes to escape. He wants to be a writer and his current job suffocates him. He has no more motivation than Laura to pursue romantic relationships, professional success or even ordinary friendships and prefers to retreat into the fantasies provided by literature and movies and the solace provided by his constant drunkenness.

Amanda's relationship with reality is the most complicated. At first she comes off as a silly woman who lives in the past and glories in her romantic memories of Blue Mountain and her days as a southern belle. She refuses to give importance to any expression from her children