

**Tennessee Williams: *The Glass  
Menagerie*  
Paper-III  
American literature**

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## MCQ'S

1. Tennessee William was born on-
- 26 March 1911
  - 24 Feb.1912
  - 27 April 1930
  - 26 August 1911
- Ans. A.

2. Tennessee William died on-
- 25 Feb. 1983
  - 26 March 1984
  - 27 April 1982
  - 10<sup>th</sup> August 1987
- Ans. A

3. Where does Tom work?
- At a pharmacy
  - At a shoe warehouse
  - At a flower shop
  - For a newspaper
- Ans. B

4. What does Tom like to write?
- Poetry
  - Musical librettos
  - Journalistic dispatches
  - Bad checks
- Ans. A

5. Where does The Glass Menagerie take place?
- Cleveland
  - New York City
  - Mississippi
  - St. Louis
- Ans. D

6. At the beginning of the play, where is Laura supposedly attending classes?
- At a language school
  - At a business college
  - At a dance academy
  - At a high school
- Ans. B

7. The Glass Menagerie is a “memory play”. From which character’s memory is it drawn?

- a. Tom’s
- b. Amanda’s
- c. Laura’s
- d. Mr. Winfield’s

Ans. A

8. For what does Amanda conduct a telephone campaign in order to make extra money?

- a. A local election
- b. Magazine subscription
- c. A charity
- d. Temperance

Ans. B

9. Amanda returns a library book that Tom has checked out. Who is the author of this book?

- a. Hart crane
- b. Frederick Neitzsche
- c. Henrik Ibsen
- d. D.H Lawrence

Ans. D

10. The action of the play is set nearest to which era of American history?

- a. Reconstruction
- b. The Great Depression
- c. The roaring Twenties
- d. The swell Fifties

Ans. B

11. According to Tom, where does he spend most of his nights?

- a. At smoky jazz joints
- b. At the movies
- c. At his best girls house
- d. At the offices of the Cleveland plain dealer

Ans. B

12. Laura keeps a collection of tiny glass-

- a. Cocktail stirrers
- b. Animals
- c. Christmas ornaments
- d. Flowers

Ans. B

13. For whom did Tom’s father work?

- a. A canned good business
- b. The department of the interior

- c. A glue manufacturer
- d. The telephone company

Ans. D

14. What is Laura's favorite animal among her glass figurines?

- a. A fawn
- b. A leopard
- c. A dinosaur
- d. A unicorn

Ans. D

15. What is Jim's nickname for Tom?

- a. Marlowe
- b. Jonson
- c. Webster
- d. Shakespeare

Ans. D

16. What class did Jim and Laura have together in high school?

- a. Wood shop
- b. Chorus
- c. Spanish
- d. Mental shop

Ans B

17. Jim's family is -?

- a. Irish
- b. African –American
- c. Spanish
- d. Russian

Ans. A

18. Why did Jim call Laura "Blue Roses"?

- a. Because she wore blue roses in her hair
- b. Because it was the title of a popular song
- c. Because it sounds like "Pleurisies"
- d. Because he called all the girls that

Ans. C

19. What is across the alley from the Wingfields apartment?

- a. A church
- b. A speakeasy
- c. A library
- d. A dance hall

Ans. D

20. What does Amanda make Tom promise that he will never be?

- a. A lawyer
- b. A drunkard
- c. An oboist
- d. A money lender

Ans. B

21. What, according to Tom is man by instinct?

- a. A lover, a hunter, a fighter
- b. A dancer, a singer, a cook
- c. A sprinter a builder an achiever
- d. A poet a martyr a soothsayer

Ans. A

22. How does Tom plunge the family into darkness?

- a. By not paying the water bill
- b. By not paying the gas bill
- c. By not paying the phone bill
- d. By not paying the light bill

Ans. D

23. How did Tennessee Williams refer to the 1960s?

- a. As his everlasting summer of love
- b. As his stoned age
- c. As the winter of my discontent
- d. As the age of revolution through theatre

Ans. B

24. The action of the play takes place in the-

- a. 1960
- b. 1930
- c. 1890
- d. 1950

Ans. B

25. Amanda is from-

- a. Canada
- b. The South
- c. England
- d. Mexico

Ans. B

Introduction to the author- Tennessee Williams, original name Thomas Lanier Williams, born March 26, 1911, Columbus, Miss; U.S. dies Feb 25<sup>th</sup>, 1983, New York City. American dramatist whose plays reveal a world of human frustration in which sex and violence underlie an atmosphere of romantic gentility Williams became interested in playwriting while at the university of Missouri (Columbia) and Washington university ( St.

Louis) and worked at it even during the depression. While employed in a St. Louis shoe factory. Little theatre groups produced some of his work, encouraging him to study dramatic writing at the university of Iowa where he earned a B.A. in 1938.

### *The Glass Menagerie* -

Tennessee Williams - 'The Glass Menagerie' one act drama produced in 1944 and published in 1945. The Glass Menagerie launched Williams's career and is considered by some critic to be his finest drama. Amanda Wingfield lives in a St. Louis tenement, clinging to the myth of her early years as a Southern belle, repeating romantic stories of those years to her two children. Her daughter, Laura, who wears a leg brace, is painfully shy and often seeks solace in her collection of small glass animals. Amanda's son, Tom, through whose memory the action is seen, is desperate to escape his stifling home life and his warehouse job.

Amanda encourages him to bring "gentleman callers" home to his sister. When Tom brings Jim O'Connor for dinner, Amanda believes that her prayers have been answered. Laura blossoms during Jim's visit, flattered by his attention. After kissing her, however, Jim confesses that he is engaged to be married. Laura retreats to her shell, and Amanda, blames Tom, who leaves home for good after a final fight with his mother.

### II. Short- Answer type 2-3 lines

Q1. How does '*The Glass Menagerie*' relate to Tennessee Williams life?

Ans. The Glass Menagerie is a memory play. Tennessee Williams tells us this in his production notes, stage directions, and the first speech of the play. Williams used his own isolation and that of his family. The Glass Menagerie mirrors Tennessee Williams life.

Q2. What is the main plot of *The Glass Menagerie*?

Ans. The title of the play, and the play's most prominent symbol, the glass menagerie represents Laura's fragility, otherworldliness and tragic beauty. The collection embodies Laura's imaginative world, her haven from society.

Q3. What is the meaning of *The Glass Menagerie*?

Ans. A Glass Menagerie is a collection of small, glass shaped animals that are usually put on a shelf as decoration. From the title of Williams story, it shows what the one of most important symbol in the play is, Laura's glass menagerie. Laura is a unique character of the play.

Q4. What does the coffin symbolize in *The Glass Menagerie*?

Ans. At the beginning of scene Four, Tom, returning home from the movies, tells Laura about a magic show in which the magician performs the coffin trick. Tom, who dreams of adventure and literary greatness but is tied down to a mindless job and a demanding family, sees the coffin as a symbol of his own life situation.

Q5. Discuss *The Glass Menagerie* as a memory play?

Ans. *The Glass Menagerie* is a memory play by Tennessee Williams that premiered in 1944 and catapulted Williams from obscurity to fame. The play has strong autobiographical elements, featuring characters based on its author, his histrionic mother, and his mentally fragile sister. In writing the play, Williams drew on an earlier short story, as well as a screenplay he had written under the title of 'The Gentleman Caller'.

III Short - Answer type 75 words questions

Q1. What does *The Glass Menagerie* symbolize?

Ans. The glass Menagerie is also a symbol of isolation. It is a symbol of the artificiality of her handicapped and heavily interiorized creativity. In the same line of interpreting this symbol, it appears to be a symbol of the reality of illusion, which is overtly pleasingly to Laura. As the title of the play informs us, the glass Menagerie, or collection of animals, is the play's central symbol. Laura's collection of glass animal figures represents a number of facets of her personality. Like the figurines, Laura is delicate, fanciful, somehow old-fashioned. Glass is transparent, but when light is shied upon it correctly, it refracts an entire rainbow of colours. Similarly, Laura though quiet and bland around strangers, is a source of strange, multifaceted delight to those who choose to look at her in the right light. The Menagerie also represents the imaginative world to which Laura devotes herself a world that is colorful and enticing but based on fragile illusions.

Q2. Discuss the character sketch of Laura in *The Glass Menagerie*?

Ans. Laura is presented as an extremely shy and sensitive person. Her shyness is emphasized almost immediately of Laura's overly sensitive nature. She is so nervous that she cannot even attend business school without becoming violently sick. She is frightened and nervous when Tom and Amada quarrel. She possesses a glass menagerie which she cares for with great tenderness. And she has withdrawn from the world- withdrawal from what is real into what is make-believe. Laura has a slight physical defect- a limp- but she has magnified this limp until it has affected her entire personality. Laura's oversensitive nature makes her think that everyone notices her limp; it becomes for her a huge stumbling block to normal living. She cannot get over it and into the real world. Her inability to overcome this defect causes her to withdraw into her world of illusion. The limp then becomes symbolic of Laura's inner nature. As Tom says, it's not just Laura's being crippled that makes her different, but she is just different. So she lives in a world of old phonograph records and glass animals.

Q3. Discuss the character Sketch of Amanda Winfield?

Ans. A faded Southern belle who grew up in Blue Mountain Mississippi, abandoned by her husband who is trying to raise her two children under harsh financial conditions. Amanda is very eager to see the marriage of her daughter. But Laura is not well, a

childhood illness has left her with a short limp, and she has a mental fragility and inferiority complex that has isolated her from the outside world. Amanda yearns for the comforts of her youth and also longs for her children to have the same comforts, but her devotion to them has made her- as she admits at one point- almost 'hateful' towards them. Amanda's constant nagging of Tom and her refusal to see Laura for who she really is are certainly reprehensible, but Amanda also reveals a willingness to sacrifice for her loved ones that is on many ways unparalleled in the play. She subjects herself to the humiliating drudgery of subscription sales in order to enhance Laura's marriage prospects, without ever uttering so much as a word of complaint. The safest conclusion to draw is that Amanda is not evil but is deeply flawed. In fact, her flaws are centrally responsible for the tragedy comedy, and theatrical flair of her character. Like her children, Amanda withdraws from reality into fantasy. Unlike them, she is convinced that she is not doing so and consequently, is constantly making efforts to engage with people and the world outside her family. Amanda's monologues to her children, on the phone, and to Jim all reflect quite clearly her moral and psychological failings, but they are also some of the most colorful and unforgettable words in the play.

Q4. Discuss the character sketch of Tom Winfield?

Ans. Tom's double role in *The Glass Menagerie* – as a character whose recollections the play documents and as a character who acts within those recollections- underlines the play's tension between objectively presented dramatic truth and memory's distortion of truth. Unlike the other characters, Tom sometimes addresses the audience directly, seeking to provide a more detached explanation and assessment of what has been happening onstage. But at the same time, he demonstrates real and sometimes juvenile emotions as he takes part in the play's action. This duality can frustrate our understanding of Tom, as it is hard to decide whether he is a character whose assessments should follow the nature of recollection is itself problematic: memory often involves confronting a past in which one was less virtuous than one is now. Because *The Glass Menagerie* is partly autobiographical, and because Tom is a stand-in for the playwright himself (William's given name was Thomas, and he like Tom spent part of his youth in St. Louis with an unstable mother and sister, his father absent much of the time), we can apply this comment on the nature of memory to Williams' memories of his own youth. Tom attitude toward Amanda and Laura has puzzled critics. Even though he clearly cares for them, he is frequently indifferent and even cruel towards them. His speech at the close of the play demonstrates his strong feelings for Laura. But he cruelly deserts her and Amanda, and not once in the course of the play does he behave kindly or lovingly toward Laura- not even when he knocks down her glass menagerie. Tom insistence that Laura is hopelessly peculiar and cannot survive in the outside world, while Amanda( and later Jim) claims that Laura's oddness is a positive thing, could have as much to do with his jealous desire to keep his sister to himself as with Laura's own quirks.

IV Long Answer type Question (150 words)

Q1. What is the main idea of *The Glass Menagerie*?



Ans. The main themes in the *Glass Menagerie* are memory and nostalgia, filial piety and duty, and gender roles. Memory and nostalgia: The *Glass Menagerie* takes place in Tom's memory. Tom, Laura, Amanda, and Jim each feel the pull of both painful memories and nostalgia. The *Glass Menagerie* is an American classic that tells a tragic family tale of love, bitterness, and abandonment. But beyond its delicate glass unicorn and heartbreaking drama, this Tennessee Williams play proved to be a defining moment for the author- and for theatre history

The main themes in *The Glass Menagerie* are memory and nostalgia, filial piety and duty, and gender roles.

Memory and nostalgia- the *Glass Menagerie* by Tennessee Williams describes the play as a "memory play" setting an imperialistic tone from the beginning. This description indicates that Williams does not intend for the audience to understand the play as a depiction of reality; after all memories are inherently unreliable and subjective. When Tom introduces himself at the start of the play, he explains that the entire play takes place in his memory which emphasizes the unreliability of the story; Tom even points out his selectivity and subjective cautioning the audience to remember that the play is not a depiction of his life as it actually happened.

Filial piety and duty- Amanda, a single mother is obsessed with the notion of filial piety, and notion of filial piety, and much of her conversation with Tom concerns his duties and responsibilities to his family. She speaks often of her disappointment and rage at being abandoned by her husband, and when she is angry at Tom, she compares his behavior to his family; he abandoned his filial duties, broke his wife's heart and damaged his wife's self perception. The effects of these consequences play out throughout every scene of the play.

Gender Roles- Throughout the play, traditional gender roles influence the behaviors of every character. Though old fashioned notions of femininity have betrayed Amanda, she continues to live according to these notions and to pressure her daughter to follow them. In her youth, Amanda's beauty and vivacious personality, both feminine ideals typical of this time and place, attraction did not last. Amanda also pressures Tom and Laura to live according to these stereotypical gender roles. She expects Tom to fulfill the role of provider that his father left open; for a time, Tom sacrifice his own desires in order to support his mother and sister, but by the end of the play, Tom leaves, no longer able to live according to his mother's terms and demonstrating the dark and selfish side of the masculine stereotype.

Q2. Discuss the dramatic technique in *The Glass Menagerie*?

Ans. Tennessee Williams has given a purely unique touch to *The Glass Menagerie* by not dividing his play into acts. Unlike other classical plays and the nineteenth century plays *The Glass Menagerie* has not been divided into Acts. It is a collection of seven scenes. Though the play is a collection of scenes, these scenes are brought in a sense of tight unity. *The Glass Menagerie* is an enactment moments in memory it is very difficult to divide the action. The content of memory is not subject to the structural division. The substance of memory gets unfolded in an uninterrupted and unperturbed

manner. That is why the dramatic action remained undivided and unbroken. The technique of avoiding the principle of dividing the action into Acts had been effectively handled by Tennessee Williams in *The Glass Menagerie*. The second effective technique handled by Tennessee Williams is the technique of the psychological realism. This technique helped the playwright to give particular attention to the organization of conversation. The third crucial technique Williams adopted is the memory play. *The Glass Menagerie* is a modernist play, which defies the illusionist conventions, it is pretty imperative to include one commentator, "yes, I have tricks in my pockets; I have things up my sleeve. But I am the opposite of a stage magician. He gives you illusion that has the appearance of truth. I give you truth in the pleasant disguise of illusion". The fourth virile technique handled by Williams in *The Glass Menagerie* is the technique of using music, lighting, legend, screen play and images. These various elements help to embody the alive and fresh moment of the past in the memory of the narrator. To bring into the prominence the pathos and plight of characters Williams introduced legends and images. For instance, when Laura was bringing out her past life in school from the chamber-box of her memory, the image blues-rose came. When Amanda was recklessly persuading Tom to stop hankering for a movie and adventure the legend of Jolly Roger came. In this technique helped the playwright to catch the emotional intensity of the present by virtue of legend and screenplay.