

The Glass Menagerie Exploring Themes Post-Show Activity		
<i>Length</i>	<i>Grade Level</i>	<i>Content Area</i>
1-2 class periods (45 – 90 minutes each)	Middle School & High School	ELA, Theatre
Objective	Materials Needed	
Students will identify and analyze the themes present in <i>The Glass Menagerie</i> , using various modes of expression to showcase their understanding.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Whiteboard and markers • Chart paper or poster boards • Art supplies • Access to digital tools • Story Map (included) 	
Activity Overview		
<p><i>NOTE: This activity has been aligned with TEKS and Universal Design for Learning. TEKS can be found at the end of this document. Check out the "Notes" section for ideas on how to expand activities or provide additional scaffolding.</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Introduction Themes in The Glass Menagerie 2. Group Discussion Themes and Scenes 3. Group Work Time Creative Expression 4. Presentations Sharing and Feedback 5. Reflection Making Connections 		
1. Introduction Themes in <i>The Glass Menagerie</i>	10 minutes	
<p><i>Activity Steps</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) Start with a brief discussion about the concept of themes in theatre. Explain how <i>The Glass Menagerie</i> addresses various themes such as family obligation, the desire to escape and feeling trapped, and the fragile connections of the characters. b) Ask students to brainstorm any themes they observed during the play. Write their ideas on the whiteboard. 	<p><i>Notes</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A printable story map is included with this document. Encourage students to use this outline to organize their notes during the discussion and group work time. • Guide them to consider specific scenes. 	

<p>2. Group Discussion Themes and Scenes</p>	<p>10-15 minutes</p>
<p><i>Activity Steps</i></p> <p>a) Divide students into small groups and assign each group a specific theme from the play. Possible themes could include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The struggle with loneliness and a desire for meaningful connection. - Family dynamics and obligations. - The conflict of dreams for the future and demands for now. <p>b) Have each group discuss how their assigned theme was portrayed in the play by analyzing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Key scenes that highlighted the theme. - Character interactions that exemplified the theme. - Any comedic elements that contributed to their understanding of the theme. 	<p><i>Notes</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bridge the language of the students (the way they phrased their ideas) with any academic or formal variations you wish to support. “Things get weird when people don’t talk to each other” would be another way of saying “the chaos of communication and misunderstandings.” Learn more about UDL guidelines for language and symbols here.
<p>3. Group Work Time Creative Expression</p>	<p>25-30+ minutes</p>
<p><i>Activity Steps</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Each group will create a visual representation of their assigned theme. They can choose from various formats, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A poster that includes memorable quotes from the play, visuals, and explanations of the theme. - A collage using magazine cutouts, drawings, or digital images that symbolize the theme. - A short multimedia presentation that combines images, text, and audio to convey the theme. 	<p><i>Notes</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use a visible timer while the students are creating and give them verbal warnings. • Keep the list of themes visible if possible. • Encourage the use of their story map and discussion notes as needed.

<p>4. Presentations Sharing and Feedback</p>	<p>15-20+ minutes</p>
<p><i>Activity Steps</i></p> <p>a) Designate a stage area and have each person or group present their work, explaining their theme and how it was expressed in <i>The Glass Menagerie</i>.</p> <p>b) During presentations, use “See / Think / Wonder” to encourage reflection from the rest of the class:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What did you see in this visual? Objectively, without interpretation. Just visual details. - What do you think is happening in this visual? What do you see that makes you think that? - What do you wonder? What questions come up for you as you look at this stage picture? Use “I wonder” to start your answer. 	<p><i>Notes</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If time allows, students can display their work in gallery walk format. • “See / Think / Wonder” is an Artful Thinking routine. You can learn more about it and similar exercises here.
<p>Reflection Making Connections</p>	<p>5-10 minutes</p>
<p><i>Activity Steps</i></p> <p>a) Think about what you knew or thought of the themes in <i>The Glass Menagerie</i> before your exploration.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Fill in the blanks: “I used to think _____. Now I think _____.” <p>b) How did the themes enhance your understanding or enjoyment of the play?</p> <p>c) Can you relate any of the themes to your own experiences or to current events?</p>	<p><i>Notes</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reflections can be written in journals or as exit tickets or shared in pairs or small groups before shared with the class.

TEKS			
<i>TEKS – MS ELA</i>	<i>TEKS – HS ELA</i>	<i>TEKS – MS Theatre</i>	<i>TEKS – HS Theatre</i>
<p>(6.9) - Students analyze, make inferences, and draw conclusions about expository text and provide evidence from text to support their analysis.</p> <p>(7.5) - Students analyze, make inferences, and draw conclusions about persuasive texts and provide evidence from text to support their analysis.</p> <p>(8.6) - Students analyze and evaluate the effectiveness of text features, including print and digital sources, to gain information.</p>	<p>(9.6) - Students analyze and evaluate the effectiveness of the author's use of literary devices in various texts.</p> <p>(10.8) - Students analyze how authors use literary elements and literary devices to create meaning and effect in various genres.</p> <p>(11.10) - Students analyze and evaluate the effectiveness of a variety of texts, including plays, to interpret themes, character development, and author's purpose.</p>	<p>(117.4) - (1) Foundations: Inquiry and understanding in theatre. Students develop theatre skills through inquiry, research, and experimentation.</p> <p>(117.4) - (2) Creative expression: Performance. Students perform in a variety of contexts to communicate ideas, emotions, and themes.</p> <p>(117.4) - (3) Historical and cultural relevance. Students examine the historical and cultural context of theatrical works to understand their significance.</p>	<p>(117.5) - (1) Foundations: Inquiry and understanding in theatre. Students engage in critical analysis of theatrical works, understanding the role of various elements in performance.</p> <p>(117.5) - (2) Creative expression: Performance. Students refine performance skills through rehearsal, performance, and reflection on their work.</p> <p>(117.5) - (3) Historical and cultural relevance. Students analyze the impact of historical and cultural factors on theatrical works, including themes, styles, and conventions.</p>

How to Use this Story Map

This graphic organizer provides a structured way to analyze key elements of the play. It highlights character dynamics, conflicts, themes, and the setting to help students critically engage with the material.

Purpose of the Story Map

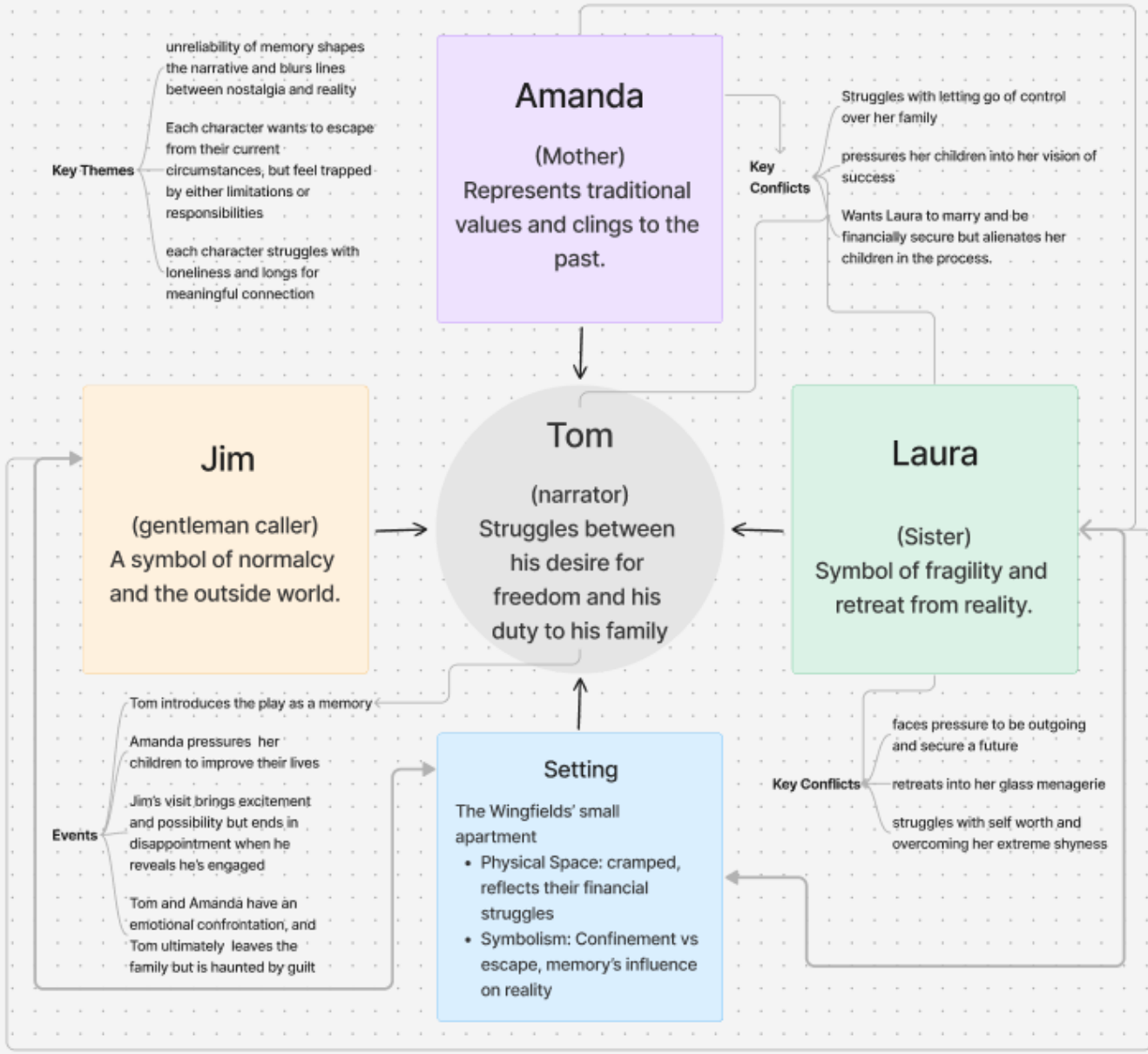
- **Support Critical Thinking:** Encourage students to identify and analyze relationships, conflicts, and themes in the story.
 - **Guide Discussions:** Use it as a visual aid to facilitate group or class discussions about the characters' roles, motivations, and the overarching themes.
 - **Build Connections:** Help students link the setting and events to the play's key messages and resolutions.
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Tips for Effective Use

- Use the organizer as a flexible framework; adapt it for different levels of analysis based on students' understanding.
 - Encourage students to draw connections between the play's themes and real-world scenarios.
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This tool is designed to spark engagement and deeper thinking, making the play's themes and character dynamics more accessible for students.

The Glass Menagerie Story Map



Notes & Personal Reflections

| STAGE |

Pictures From Home Looks At The Parent Behind The Photo

JESSICA GOLDMAN | JANUARY 25, 2024 | 8:27AM



Photo by Lynn Lane Todd Waite and Zachary Fine as in Alley Theatre's production of Pictures from Home.

Larry's favorite photograph of his dad is the one his father hates the most.

The shot, taken by Larry, a distinguished photographer, is a close-up of his father, Irv, sleeping peacefully on the family's California living room couch. Through Larry's eyes, the image captures the vulnerability his father masks in real life. A chance to see the real him without all the masculine confidence Irv swings around daily like his beloved golf club.

But for Irv, the shot is all wrong. He looks old, for one thing. He may be 70 but he sure doesn't feel it. Plus it's dimly lit. And who the hell would want to look at a sleeping man anyway, what's the point? Where's the rigor in that?

Images, how we see them, how we interpret them, the stories they tell about us and the slippery accuracy of those tales are at the center of Larry and Irv's prickly father/son relationship in Sharr White's, *Pictures From Home*, now getting a handsomely sensitive and whimsical production at the Alley.

Based on the acclaimed 1992 photo memoir of Larry Sultan, the show (developed at the 2020 Alley All New Festival) follows Larry (Zachary Fine) as he leaves his wife and children several times a month to fly to his aging parents' home for "the project". A loosely defined photo safari where Larry hopes to capture his parents' lives accurately through his lens. Certainly, more accurately than the family photos and Super 8 reels he's seen of them.

Retired executive salesman Irv (Todd Waite) and Larry's Real Estate Agent mum, Jean (Susan Koozin) may look like the definition of the perfectly successful American nuclear family in snapshot, but Larry doesn't want the perfect. He wants the people, warts and all. To understand his parents, to better understand himself. To keep his gaze on them, therefore keeping them present and alive.

Set mostly in the 1980s over eight years, we watch Larry drop in and photograph his parents mostly going about their lives, much to his father's piqued annoyance and mother's more measured acceptance. All the while, real photos of Larry's parents are seen projected on screens that drop in and out of the stage. A chance for the characters to discuss and disagree on them.

There's lots of humor to be mined in their encounters, parents bickering, Larry and Irv seemingly speaking different languages when it comes to expressing feelings and self-truths, Jean trying to keep the peace and her mind in the process.

Director Rob Melrose astutely never lets these funny moments fall prey to tropes. There's lots of room to laugh here at Irv's cuss-inflected exasperations, Larry's endlessly annoying probing questions and Jean's flappability. But we do so feeling the undercurrent of sadness throughout.

Funny as this family's miscommunications and inability to provide what the other wants is, we see the frustration underneath. Frustration that they can't quite be heard. Or access the tools to understand what to say. Or be respected for who they think they are. There's love there for sure though, otherwise, they wouldn't keep trying.

It could all be so sentimental, this dance they do. After all, at an hour and forty-five minutes with no intermission, we're held captive in father and son's endless and often repetitive arguments over Larry's work, all the while knowing that "the project" is a commercial success in the end.

What keeps the show fresh for us is the acting. This review could have easily been three words divided only by exclamation points. Zachary! Susan! Todd!

Returning to the Alley, this time without the lizard skin he so superbly sported in Edward Albee's *Seascape*, Zachary Fine gives an expressive sweetness to Larry that helps stretch our patience with his neediness and intrusion. Not that what he's reaching for is wrong or unworthy, it's just selfish and

a little annoying. Yet thanks to Fine's open-heartedness, we can't help but root for Larry.

It's hard to name a production that Susan Koozin doesn't make better and this is no exception. As Jean, Koozin gets to show off her impeccable comic timing, but it's her motherly, loving moments that really hit.

"You act as if you're the only child in the world and we're the only parents," she says to Larry trying to persuade him that all children yearn for the understanding he's desperate for. That Koozin can make this sound both admonishing and assuring is the work of an actor fully driving her character's emotional bus.

Finally, anyone waiting for Todd Waite to step out of the camp roles and into something meatier, more expansive and demanding – this is your chance and you will not be disappointed. As Irv, Waite is tasked with the heavy lifting in this show and he carries multitudes - abrasiveness, charm, disappointment, self-aggrandizement, self-doubt, jokester and, of course, fatherly judgment.

That we are utterly frustrated by Irv's immovability/refusal to admit to inner life/mistreatment of his wife and son and yet feel so protective of him is thanks to Waite's wonderfully nuanced performance.

As Larry's project winds up, we're not really sure what he discovered about his parents. That they're flawed people just like everyone else? Perhaps. There's no big aha moment here. No satisfying takeaway. Much like life itself, things just move on. The only difference is Larry had photographs to prove it.

Pictures From Home runs to February 11 at Alley Theatre, 615 Texas. For more information, call 713-220-5700 or visit alleytheatre.org. \$27-\$81.