



11th Grade Summer Reading and Questions (girls not taking AP English)

All My Sons by Arthur Miller

The Glass Menagerie by Tennessee Williams

We ask that students please have their own copies of the books, and not use the library, so that they can have a book to use (and annotate) in class.

Discussion Questions for All My Sons

1. What is the significance of the tree? What does it mean to each character that it fell?
2. What larger understanding of the characters and the conflict does the reader draw from all the “small talk”?
3. Why doesn't Joe want Chris to propose?
4. What type of evidence does Kate rely on that Larry is alive?
5. The character of Frank serves what purpose in the play, what ideas does he represents?
6. What is Jim Bayliss's conflict with his job and marriage, how does it enhance the reader's understanding of Chris's worldview?
7. Why is Joe so generous and forgiving towards Steve Deever and his actions?
8. What does the reader learn about Chris and Joe from Ann and Sue's conversation?
9. Why does Chris think he's unworthy of Ann? How does that explain his larger worldview and actions towards Joe at the end of the play?
10. Why does Kate tell Joe to “be smart” when George comes. What does that comment reveal?
11. What is revealed in George's conversation with Ann, how does it change relationship dynamics?
12. What does Kate say that implicates Joe?
13. Why does Kate refuse to accept that Larry is dead?
14. Why did Ann bring the letter from Larry? What purpose did it serve her and the story?
15. What is Joe's defense to Chris and to Kate, what does it reveal about each of their priorities?
16. Why does Joe want to commit suicide if Chris doesn't accept his forgiveness?
17. What happens to Chris's idealism at the end of the play?
18. Who does the title “All My Sons” refer to?
19. What themes are present in the play, how does Arthur Miller tease them out?

Discussion Questions for The Glass Menagerie

Scenes 1&2

1. What is the effect of the actors eating without food or utensils at the beginning of the play?
2. What is the importance of Blue Mountain for Amanda? How is this important in the play as a whole?
3. Do you sense any early conflict between Amanda and Tom? What is the source of this conflict?
4. What's the purpose of introducing the idea of Laura's old high school love interest at this point?
5. Sum up the situations at the end of scene 2 in terms of those themes or conflicts that are important for the play as a whole.

Scenes 3&4

1. What's the significance of our seeing Amanda on the phone selling subscriptions at the beginning of scene 3?
2. Why is Amanda especially angry at Tom's drinking?
3. What's the point of their conflict over the books Tom reads?
4. What's the point of Tom's making up the stories about himself on?
5. We see at the beginning of scene 4 a dramatization of Tom's drinking. What is the significance to his story of Malvolio the Magician?
6. What different attitudes toward humanity do Tom and Amanda express when they discuss things like instinct and spirit? Does the play as a whole suggest that one of them is right?

Scene 5

1. How much time has passed between the previous scenes and this scene? What's the purpose of this skip in time?
2. What does it tell us about Amanda that as soon as she hears there is to be a gentleman caller she starts to quiz Tom about whether he drinks, what his nationality is, etc?
3. Who is right, Amanda or Tom, in their discussion of Laura? Discuss.
4. What does Amanda's concern for the moon and wishing on it tell us about her?

Scene 6

1. What do the changes in the set and the dress of the characters tell us?
2. What's the significance of the description of Laura, especially "a piece of translucent glass touched by light . . . not actual"?
3. What's the point of Amanda's near-monologue about her past?
4. What's the point of having the gentleman caller be someone Laura knew in the past? What does this add to the situation?

5. What do you suppose our reaction as an audience is supposed to be when we see Amanda come out in her old southern dress with all her southern charm? Are we supposed to laugh at her, sympathize with her, or what?
6. Are we prepared for Laura's reaction of getting sick, not being able to answer the door, etc? Explain.

Scene 7

1. Is it plausible that someone so painfully shy can actually get involved as she does with Jim in this scene? If you think so, consider the elements that make it plausible.
2. What is the significance of Jim's old name for Laura – Blue Roses?
3. How accurate is Jim's analysis of Laura's problems? How do you judge Jim as he is saying all this? Is he cruel? Understanding? Does the tone of his remarks tell us anything about him?
4. What's the significance of the glass menagerie and in particular the unicorn? What is the significance of the unicorn losing its horn?
5. Is Jim leading her on, or does he experience sincere feelings? How do you know?
6. Look at Amanda's statement to Tom about his living in a dream. Would this apply to her too? How so?