Ms. Arnstein
Literature of the United States
Summer Reading 2026
Due Date: First Day of School

You will read **two books** for your summer reading assignment. The first book is a play entitled *The Glass Menagerie*. The second book is one you may choose from a list on the subsequent pages. This assignment looks long, but it is the same as all previous 11th grade summer reading assignments. If you have questions, please contact me via email at earnstein@vischool.org.

Summer reading Assignment Part I

All students must read *The Glass Menagerie* by Tennessee Williams. I have enough copies of *The Glass Menagerie* for students to borrow; however, if you borrow my books, you may not write in them. Stop by ASAP to sign out a book if you choose to borrow one. Otherwise, purchase a copy so you can annotate the text and highlight important passages.

About *The Glass Menagerie*

Tom Wingfield lives with his mother and disabled adult sister in a tenement in Saint Louis. Although Tom is desperate to leave his family so that he can live a life of his choosing, he feels compelled to care for his mother, Amanda, who has been abandoned by her husband, and his sister, Laura, who is paralyzed by fear and unable to create a meaningful life for herself. Amanda desperately wants Laura to get married, so she asks Tom to find a nice "gentleman caller" to bring home to Laura. This lovely, bittersweet play is loosely based on Tennessee Williams' own life and is considered one of America's greatest plays.

The End Goal

There is an expectation that you will be able to discuss the play fluently at the beginning of the school year and, at some point early in the school year, write an essay about it.

The Assignment

- Please answer all questions on the study guide. I will have paper copies of the study guide in my classroom if you like. The study guide can also be found on pages 9-14 of this document. I will also email you a copy of the study guide before the end of the school year so that you can save a copy of it and type your answers if you like.
- The study guide is worth 25 points.

Summer reading Assignment Part II

In the second part of the summer reading assignment, you must read one work written by or about Indigenous people in the United States or Canada. I have a list of suggestions on page 5.

By engaging in this work, you will **deepen your understanding of Indigenous narratives**, literature's role in cultural representation, and the power of storytelling in shaping perspectives on history and identity. You may find yourself concentrating on any number of topics: residential boarding schools, loss of language, loss of cultural identity, loss of land, Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, poverty, generational trauma, conflicts between Indigenous people and white settlers, foster care, the Indian Child Welfare Act, and more. I have included a **list of terms** on pages 6-9 that may be relevant to your particular book.

Instructions for Reading

1. Select a book that meaningfully explores Indigenous/Native American life in the United States or Canada. Book suggestions can be found on page 5. If you would like to select a book not on the list, you MUST ask my permission first.
2. Annotate your text by writing in the margins, using post-it notes, or keeping a reading journal.
    a. Identify and analyze key literary elements in both books, including themes, character development, symbolism, and style. In particular, focus on how these elements shape the portrayal of Indigenous experiences.
    b. Examine the messages – Reflect on the message your chosen work conveys about life for Indigenous peoples. Consider historical accuracy, cultural representation, and the perspectives presented by the authors.
3. Feel free to do outside research, as it will likely improve your understanding of the work. If you quote an outside source while working on your final assignment, please make sure you have a proper MLA citation.

Instructions for Summer reading Assignment

You will choose **ONE** of the following ways to demonstrate your understanding. Regardless of format, your work must show **clear, specific engagement with the text** and complete originality.

Option 1: Literary Analysis Essay

Write a **2–3 page essay** in which you:

- Briefly summarize the novel so that someone unfamiliar with it can understand its key plot moments
- Analyze a central theme or issue in the text
- Use **specific textual evidence** to support your claims
- Consider how literary elements (character, setting, symbolism, etc.) develop that theme
- Explain what the text suggests about Indigenous experience

Option 2: Reading Journal

Create a journal with **8–10 entries** (about 1–2 paragraphs each).

Each entry should:

- Reference a specific passage or moment in the text
- Include a quotation
- Offer thoughtful analysis (not just summary) of the events of the text and their connection to Indigenous history.
- Make connections (to history, other texts, or larger themes) and indicate what the text suggests about the experiences of Indigenous people

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Option 3: Creative Project + Reflection

Create a project that represents an important idea, theme, or experience from the text (examples: artwork, visual collage, short film, podcast, original writing, etc.)

You must also include a **1–2 page written reflection** that achieves the following:

- Explains your creative choices
- Connects your project to specific moments in the text
- Analyzes the ideas your project represents
- Indicate what the text suggests about the experiences of Indigenous people

Regardless of your medium or final product, you must find a way to demonstrate that you have thoroughly read and understood your chosen work.

Academic Integrity

If there is any indication that you have plagiarized any part of your assignment, received any help from an outside source (such as a parent, friend, or tutor) or used AI (like ChatGPT, Gemini, Claude, etc.) in any way, you will automatically receive a 0 without any chance to redo this work. Trust your own beautiful minds as you craft your work.

Book Suggestions

A Council of Dolls by Mona Susan Power

The Seed Keeper by Diane Wilson

The Firekeeper's Daughter by Angeline Boulley

The Road Back to Sweetgrass by Linda LeGarde Grover

Killers of the Flower Moon by David Grann

Reservation Blues by Sherman Alexie

You Don't Have to Say You Love Me by Sherman Alexie

Highway of Tears by Jessica McDiarmid

Code Talker by Joseph Bruchac

Love Medicine by Louise Erdrich

A Yellow Raft on Blue Water by Michael Dorris

Where the Dead Sit Talking by Brandon Hobson

Please consider visiting Birchbark Books at 2115 W 21st St, Minneapolis, MN 55405 for great recommendations on works by Indigenous authors and about Indigenous topics. There are also some resources listed on Birchbark Books' website, although I don't know how many of these books are connected to the issues we will be discussing during the school year. Here's a link: https://birchbarkbooks.com/collections/fiction?page=1

You might also consider looking for books related specifically to Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Native American children in foster care, the Indian Child Welfare Act, land allotment, forced resettlement of Indigenous people, etc. PLEASE feel free to ask me for advice or recommendations. All book selections must pertain to Indigenous people.

Brief History of Early American Relationship with Native People and Important Background

From the earliest days of the establishment of the United States of America, the federal government wanted to take over lands occupied by Native American tribes. They had a mult-layered approach to do so:

1. Displace Indigenous people from their lands through the Indian Removal Act and reservation system
2. Insist that Indigenous people take up farming
3. Take their lands through a process called allotment
4. Educate their children by force

Allotment

As a result of the Dawes Act of 1887, Native Americans were asked to give up their tribal lands and, in exchange, receive U.S. citizenship and a portion of land to farm or ranch. The remaining, unclaimed land would be sold to White settlers. Ultimately, as a result of this Act, Native tribes relinquished hundred of millions of acres of their territorial and ancestral lands and became more deeply entrenched in poverty -- in part because the land given to them by the USA was inferior and Indigenous people were forced to take up farming, which was not necessarily part of their traditional way of life.

Fetal Alcohol Syndrome

According to the Mayo Clinic, “Fetal alcohol syndrome is a condition in a child that results from alcohol exposure during the mother's pregnancy. Drinking alcohol during pregnancy can cause the child to have disabilities related to behavior, learning and thinking, and physical development. The symptoms of fetal alcohol syndrome vary from child to child but are lifelong.”

Forced Sterilization

While exact numbers are not known, it is estimated that from 1970-1976, “physicians sterilized [removed or inhibited the function of reproductive organs] of perhaps 25% of Native American women of childbearing age, and there is evidence suggesting that the

numbers were actually even higher. Some of these procedures were performed under pressure or duress, or without the women's knowledge or understanding" (Theobold).

Indian Adoption Project

The Bureau of Indian Affairs established the Indian Adoption Project in 1958. Like the Boarding School Initiative [see "Residential Schools"], the goal of forced Native adoptions was to break Indigenous families apart and strip future generations of their ancestral languages, teachings, and practices. The program officially ended in 1967.

Social workers were enlisted to go onto reservations and justify the removal of Native children from their homes. Additionally, Indigenous families were stripped of any rights to regain custody or even see their children. Estimates from government agencies suggest that between 25 and 35 percent of all Native children were stolen from their homes and communities in the 1960s. Of these children, an estimated 85% were often adopted into non-Native families to further the government's goal of assimilation.

Indian Child Welfare Act

The Indian Child Welfare Act was a federal attempt to stop placement of Indigenous children with non-Indigenous families. Essentially, the ICWA declared that if Indigenous children must be removed from their parents, they should receive placement with "1. Preference of the child and parent, 2. Extended family, 3. Other tribal members, and 4. Other Indians" (Treuer 214).

Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women (MMIW)

"The rates of murder, rape, and violent crime are all higher than the national averages for Native American and Alaska Native women. When looking at missing and murdered cases, data shows that Native American and Alaska Native women make up a significant portion of missing and murdered individuals. A 2016 study by the National Institute of Justice (NIJ) found that more than four in five American Indian and Alaska Native women (84.3 percent) have experienced violence in their lifetime, including 56.1 percent who have experienced sexual violence." (source
https://www.bia.gov/service/mmu/missing-and-murdered-indigenous-people-crisis)

Reservation

According to the U.S. Department of the Interior/Indian Affairs, "A federal Indian reservation is an area of land reserved for a tribe or tribes under treaty or other agreement with the United States...as permanent tribal homelands, and where the federal government holds title to the land in trust on behalf of the tribe....

There are approximately 326 Indian land areas in the U.S. administered as federal Indian reservations (i.e., reservations, pueblos, rancherias, missions, villages, communities, etc.).

Some reservations are the remnants of a tribe's original land base. Others were created by the federal government for the resettling of Indian people forcibly relocated from their homelands. Not every federally recognized tribe has a reservation."

Residential Schools

Founded in the mid- to late-1800s, residential schools were designed to take Indigenous children away from their reservations and families and make them more akin to White people by forcing children to give up their names, cultural markers, language, clothing, jewelry, and customs. In residential schools, Native American children were given a basic education in math, English, and Christianity. Some schools required students to work for White families during the summer doing farming or domestic work. Violence and abuse were rampant at residential schools.

Sioux Uprising

According to Wikipedia: "The Dakota War of 1862, also known as the U.S.-Dakota War of 1862, the Sioux Uprising, the Dakota Uprising, the Sioux Outbreak of 1862, the Dakota Conflict, or Little Crow's War, was an armed conflict between the United States and several eastern bands of Dakota. It began on August 18, 1862, when the Dakota, who were facing starvation and displacement, attacked the Lower Sioux Agency and white settlements along the Minnesota River valley in southwest Minnesota. The war lasted for five weeks and resulted in the deaths of hundreds of settlers and the displacement of thousands more. In the aftermath, the Dakota people were exiled from their homelands, forcibly sent to reservations in the Dakotas and Nebraska, and the State of Minnesota confiscated and sold all their remaining

land in the state.Thirty-eight Dakota men were subsequently hanged [in Mankato, Minnesota] for crimes committed during the conflict in the largest mass execution in U.S. history." **Please note that the term "Sioux" is considered a derogatory term, in part because it was a name foisted upon Ojibwe people by European outsiders.**

Study Guide and Notes for *The Glass Menagerie*
DO NOT WRITE ON THIS DOCUMENT!!
YOU MUST SAVE A COPY OF IT FOR YOURSELF.

The Glass Menagerie Study Guide Questions

Some important terms to know: *The Glass Menagerie* contains numerous words and phrases that may be unfamiliar or strange to student audiences. You may want to take a few minutes to familiarize yourself with these terms before or while reading.

- Guernica – A town in Spain in which thousands of innocent people were killed in a bombing on April 26, 1937 during the Spanish Civil War.
- Mastication – Chewing
- Gentleman caller – Boyfriend; young man interested in dating a young woman. In the Old South a young man would be expected to visit a girl at her home where she might entertain a group of young people. Outright dating at the time was not acceptable, so young people gathered at their homes and flirted and enjoyed each other's company in the presence of chaperones.
- Business college – School for students to train for secretarial work. Typing, stenography, and other tasks needed for office work are the usual courses offered in this type of school. In the 1930s many women were joining the workforce and gained valuable skills at such schools.
- Victrola – An early type of record player that was wound with a crank to operate the turntable
- Menagerie – A display of animals, mostly wild or exotic
- Spinster – An unmarried woman. Another term often used is "old maid." Both terms can be derogatory because the expectation in the early part of the 20th century was that a woman had not fulfilled her destiny if she was not married and raising a family.
- *Pirates of Penzance* – One of many comic, light operas written by Gilbert and Sullivan
- Pleurosis – An inflammation of the lungs

- Mr. Lawrence ("that hideous book") – D.H. Lawrence was a famous (some would have said, infamous) writer whose books were known for their overt depictions of sexuality – a taboo subject during the early part of the twentieth century. One of his most famous books, published in 1928, was *Lady Chatterley's Lover*.
- Sixty-Five dollars a month – A low, but not unusually so, salary during the 1930s. The salary is typical of someone fresh out of school in an entry level position. It's about $1,470 in today's dollars.
- Cathouse – House of ill-repute; brothel.
- The Movies – In the 1930s a person could spend quite a bit of time in a movie theatre watching not just the movie itself, but travelogues (short documentaries of fascinating places around the world); newsreels (films that updated the public about current events – these were the days before television – and showed scenes of war, human interest stories, new products and inventions, etc.); and organ solos (at the time of silent movies, theatres had an organist who would provide the soundtrack for the films. Once films had sound the organs were still in place in the theatres and for some years they continued to be played before and/or after the feature film); and vaudeville acts such as singers, dancers, comedians and magicians.
- Merchant Marine – "The Merchant Marine is the fleet of ships which carries imports and exports during peacetime and becomes a naval auxiliary during wartime to deliver troops and war materiel. According to the Merchant Marine Act of 1936: 'It is necessary for the national defense... that the United States shall have a merchant marine of the best equipped and most suitable types of vessels sufficient to carry the greater portion of its commerce and serve as a naval or military auxiliary in time of war or national emergency...' During World War II the fleet was in effect nationalized, that is, the U.S. Government controlled the cargo and the destinations, contracted with private companies to operate the ships, put guns and Navy personnel (Armed Guard) on board. The Government trained the men to operate the ships and assist in manning the guns through the U.S. Maritime Service." Members of the Merchant Marine are referred to as mariners, seamen, seafarers, sailors. They are not Marines. "When training ended the person was 'released from active duty' in the Maritime Service and went to sea in the Merchant Marine. Today the Maritime Service exists only in the Maritime Academies." http://www.usmm.org/
- Berchtesgaden – A beautiful area in Germany that was used by the Nazis for their officers' pleasure. Hitler had a home there. There was also a famous hotel there that welcomed such guests as Goebbels and Himmler.

- Chamberlain – Neville Chamberlain was British Prime Minister from 1937 to 1940. He is remembered, among other things, for his signing of the Munich Agreement in 1938, giving part of Czechoslovakia to the Nazis.
- Century of Progress – A major exhibit in the 1933-34 Chicago Exposition (World's Fair), the exhibit was intended to highlight the century 1833-1933 but came to represent the modern world. The exhibit was wildly popular and helped create a feeling of hope for the future during the Great Depression.
- Future of television – Television, in the 1930s, was an interesting concept but its possibilities were only beginning to be realized.
- Dance "program" – In past centuries, a young lady attending a ball or dance would have a dance card or "program." Gentlemen would ask to be included on her program, and their names would be listed so that they could have a dance with the lady when it was their turn. Obviously, a young woman wanted as many names as possible on her program so that she would appear popular and so that she might meet eligible young men among whom she might find a prospective husband.
- Stumblejohn – Clumsy or foolish person
- Gay – Cheerful or happy. Many people today have stopped using this word to mean its original definition because the word is now more synonymous with homosexuality. The word is used in the play in its original definition.
- Jalopy - Car

Study Guide

Directions: Answer each question thoroughly in a notebook, on looseleaf, or typed as a Word or Google doc. You may not write the answers on this sheet because you don't have enough space.

Scenes One and Two

1. Tom's opening speech sketches the social background of the play and introduces the main characters. What basic yet important information does Tom provide in this speech about his family?

2. In Scene One, what indications are there that there is tension in the family? Who seems to cause the tension? Be specific and support with quotes or evidence from the play.

3. A play is put in motion by some element that upsets the situation at the beginning of the story – an inciting incident. The inciting incident 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?

4. In Scene Two, what does Laura say and do to reveal that she is set apart from the real world?

5. What places does Laura visit rather than going to the business school? Do you see any significance in those places? Return to this question again after completing the play.

6. 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? Support your opinion.

Scenes Three and Four

1. 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. Scan each scene, then answer the following questions:
   a. How does Amanda escape her reality? Be specific and support with quotes or evidence from the play.

b. How does Laura escape from the real world? Be specific and support with quotes or evidence.

c. What does Tom do to escape from his unhappiness? Be specific and support with quotes or evidence.

3. What part does Laura play in the angry argument between Tom and Amanda?

4. How does Tom hurt both Amanda and Laura at the end of Scene Three? Be specific about what he says and how these words are destructive.

5. What does Amanda ask Tom to do at the end of Scene Four?

6. What do you think Tennessee Williams wants the audience to feel about Amanda? Support with evidence.

7. How is Laura's relationship with Tom different from her relationship with Amanda? How can you tell that Tom is truly fond of Laura? Support with evidence.

Scenes Five and Six

Note: Scene Five makes several allusions. An *allusion* is a figure of speech that makes brief reference to a historical or literary figure, event or object. Following is a brief explanation of some of the allusions in Scene Five: *Tom mentions Berchtesgaden, the retreat in the mountains where Hitler entertained members of the Nazi party, and Chamberlain, the Prime Minister of England who famously gave in to Hitler, thinking war could be avoided. War will become a reality for the young people at the dance-hall in the near future. The bombing of civilians in Guernica, Spain, by Fascist German and Spanish forces is also happening at the same time as the play, so the year is probably 1937.*

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. How does Tom describe his relationship with Jim?

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?

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. 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.

Scene Seven

1. How does Laura view Jim? Support with evidence.

2. How does Jim view Laura? Support with evidence.

3. Explain how the evening ends in disappointment for Laura and Amanda.

4. How did *you* feel about Jim O'Connor in this scene? Be specific and support your opinion with evidence from the play.

5. What does Laura mean when she says about the broken horn on the unicorn: "Maybe it's a blessing in disguise"?

6. Why does Laura give Jim the unicorn? Is there a deeper meaning to it, other than the unicorn's being a sort of souvenir? Support.

7. How are Tom and Mr. Wingfield the same? How are they different? Support with evidence from the play.