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Response Journal

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The Glass Menagerie
Tennessee Williams



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Response Journal

To The Student

Although we may read a novel, play, or work of non-fiction for enjoyment, each time we read one, we are building and practicing important basic reading skills. In our ever-more complex society, in which reading has become more and more crucial for success, this, in itself, is an important reason to spend time reading for enjoyment.

Some readers, however, are able to go beyond basic reading techniques and are able to practice higher thinking skills by reflecting on what they have read and how what they read affects them. It is this act of reflection—that is, stopping to think about what you are reading—that this journal is attempting to encourage.

To aid you, we have included writing prompts for each section; however, if you find something that you wish to respond to in the book more compelling than our prompts, you should write about that. We hope you enjoy reading this book and that the act of responding to what you have read increases this enjoyment.

After you read the indicated sections, choose the questions to which you will respond. Keep in mind that there are no right or wrong answers to these prompts, and there is no one direction in which you must go.

The Glass Menagerie

Scene One

1. In Tom's opening narrative, he tells you that he will give you truth pleasantly disguised as illusions; whereas, a magician will give you illusions that appear to be truth. Advertisements in magazines or on television often sell illusions to attract a customer to purchase a product.

Write an advertisement for a household or personal product, which has the features of magician-selling illusions that appear to be truth. For instance, certain face creams promise you youthfulness regardless of your age or skin condition.

2. Amanda tells Tom, "I understood the art of conversation!" regarding her gentlemen callers who visited her at Blue Mountain. Her dialogue with the gentlemen callers would be of, "things of importance going on in the world! Never anything coarse or common or vulgar."

Compose the dialogue Amanda might have with a gentleman caller speaking of something important happening in the world that speaks of nothing coarse, common, or vulgar.

Scene Three

6. The scene begins with Tom, as the narrator, describing how the idea of Laura having a gentleman caller became obsessive to his mother. By definition, a gentleman caller visits the home of the woman he is interested in dating. He asks the parents if their daughter will see him, and if she agrees, the dating process begins. If she does not wish to see him, he leaves his “calling” card, thus being a gentleman caller.

Write a brief essay comparing and contrasting dating in Amanda’s time to today. In which era would you rather be dating? Explain your reasons for choosing the past or present dating process.

7. Amanda’s conducts “a vigorous campaign on the telephone, roping in subscribers to one of those magazines for matrons called *The Homemakers Companion*.”

Write a dialogue as a telephone solicitor for a magazine you are trying to sell. Why should people subscribe to your magazine? What features are in the magazine that would entice people to purchase a subscription? What is the name of your magazine?

8. Amanda accuses Tom of lying about going to the movies and suspects that he is involved in actions that are shameful at night. Tom is very angry about her accusations. He explains that going out to the movies is his only escape from his monotonous, dull, and routine life.

Write a couple of paragraphs describing how you “escape” when you are bored or want your own time to think or relax. Where do you go? For example, do you go for a walk, spend time in your room, or listen to music?

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14. Tom tells Amanda that he longs for adventure and states, “Man is by instinct a lover, a hunter, a fighter.” Amanda recoils from his words, associating them with instincts of animals. Amanda believes Tom should pursue “Superior things! Things of the mind and the spirit!”

Write an editorial for your school newspaper explaining the difference between Tom’s belief that his pursuits are innate and instinctual in every man, to Amanda’s belief that every man has a choice and can pursue superior activities of the mind and spirit. Include whether you agree with Tom that certain actions are instinctual in men or women. Do you think men and women have predetermined behavioral traits or does control over all behaviors come from within?

15. Amanda pleads with Tom to help Laura get settled in a house of her own before helping the Merchant Marines. She begs Tom to invite some young men from the warehouse home to meet Laura. He promises to have someone over for dinner to meet Laura.

Write a personal ad for Laura requesting to meet someone. Include a description of her personality and interests. Write a catchy title to attract readers and highlight her assets.

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25. Laura panics when the doorbell rings. “Laura catches her breath and touches her throat.” Amanda urges, and then eventually orders Laura to open the door, even though Laura says that she is feeling sick.

Write two paragraphs retelling of a time you were so nervous you felt sick to your stomach. What was the situation? Who was with you? Why were you so nervous? How did you overcome your nervousness and calm yourself?

26. After introductions, Laura “turns awkwardly and hurries into the front room...she catches her breath and darts through the portieres like a frightened deer.” As the reader, you notice the sharp contrast between Laura and Jim in mannerisms, feelings, thoughts, and social skills. They are opposites in many ways. Complete a chart comparing Laura and Jim in the four categories mentioned.

27. Jim urges Tom to take a course in public speaking, and then warns Tom that he may lose his job if he does not take this course. Tom tells Jim his future plans have been made, for he has used the money for the electric bill to pay his membership fees at the union of Merchant Seamen. He wants to become a sailor in hopes of finding real adventure. Do you believe Tom’s action of not paying his family’s electric bill in order to satisfy his own wants irresponsible?

Write a letter to Tom. In it, help him problem solve by naming more mature and responsible ways for him to pay bills and invest in his future.