

A Streetcar Named Desire

(Drama) (1951)

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Major Characters

- Blanche DuBois.....Vivien Leigh
A psychologically troubled high school literature teacher in her late 30s who comes to stay with her sister in New Orleans, Louisiana, after apparently losing her job and even her home (A large and old family plantation or farm, that she and her sister had inherited).
- Stella.....Kim Hunter
Blanche's kind and loyal younger sister, who is pregnant and living with her husband in their small New Orleans apartment.
- Stanley Kowalski.....Marlon Brando
Stella's husband, who is a somewhat crude, muscular and sweaty factory worker, who has a lot of trouble getting along with Blanche (because she is both unstable, and clearly from a higher social class).
- Mitch.....Karl Malden
Stanley's more educated friend and work mate who becomes interested in Blanche, despite Stanley's warnings to avoid her.

Plot Summary

This film is the story of Blanche DuBois, an emotionally troubled school teacher in her late 30s who comes to live with her sister Stella, and Stella's husband Stanley, in their small and messy New Orleans apartment, in the early 1950s. Although not really clear, Blanche had apparently been fired from her job as a high school literature teacher after becoming romantically involved with one of her students, and in addition, it seems that she has lost the family plantation and house----"Belle Rive"---- that she and Stella had grown up on, just outside of the small Louisiana town of Auriol. In addition, Blanche had been deeply hurt by the suicide of her young husband, and thus with no job, money or anyone to take care of her, Blanche finds herself dependent on the kindness of Stella and Stanley.

Unfortunately, it soon becomes clear that Blanche and Stanley strongly dislike each other. He does not trust her because he believes that she has stolen money from Stella, and she has no respect for him because she believes he is a crude, vulgar and over-sexed animal, which in many ways, he is (Marlon Brando's portrayal of Stanley is considered one of the great acting performances in the history of the movies, and this is the role that launched his career as one of the 20th century's most famous actors).

Despite their strong dislike for each other, there is also a certain sexual attraction between the two of them, which only adds to the tension in the small apartment. Stella, meanwhile, who is soon expecting a baby, must balance her desire to help her troubled sister with the need to save her marriage. And even she seems to eventually realize, along with Mitch and Stanley, that Blanche needs more help than even a loyal sister can offer....

A quick note on the language used in this movie: While Blanche and Stella come from an educated and wealthy background, Stanley is purely working class, and thus often speaks with the incorrect grammar that is common among less educated Americans; Be aware of mistakes such as double negatives, the use of 'ain't' and most commonly, the incorrect conjugation of "(s)he don't."

Some Words and Expressions that You May not Know

Blanche arrives in a fragile state, and soon tells Stella of all her problems from her job at school to the family house.

That's the party, all right. You did just miss her, though.

Note that in some cases, a "party" is another word for a person.

Only Mr. Edgar Alan Poe could do justice to it.

"To do justice" to something is to say it or write it in such a way that it is as good as it deserves to be (Poe is a famous American writer).

What a **convenient** location.

An excellent word for practical, or easy to use or reach.

Bless that lovely inspiration. :: Would you like a cold drink?

"To bless" something is to wish it well, often in a religious sense.

"Inspiration" is something that inspires or encourages you to do something, even if it is difficult.

Would you like some pop?

An old-fashioned but still used word for soda, such as coke or root beer.

You haven't asked me how I happened to get away from school before the Spring term ended.

"To happen" to do something is to do it without really trying that hard, often because it arrives just by chance or without effort. A school "term" is another word for semester, or the period of time that classes last.

You thought I had been fired? :: I thought you might have resigned.

"To resign" from a job is to decide to quit and leave.

I was on the verge of lunacy, almost.

To be “on the verge of” doing something is to be extremely close to doing it. “Lunacy” is a good and interesting word for craziness or insanity.

The high school superintendent suggested I take a leave of absence.

A “superintendent” is a high level official who is responsible for running an organizations such as a school. A “leave of absence” is a period of time from days to weeks or longer when a person does not go to work.

I couldn't put all those details into the wire.

Up until the 1970s, a “wire” was a telegram used to send messages.

Daylight never exposed so total a ruin.

“To expose” something is to show it to others. A “ruin” is a scene of complete destruction, waste or collapse. This is all Blanche's poetic way of saying that she feels like she looks very unattractive.

You've put on some weight. You're as plump as a little partridge.

“Plump” is one way of saying chubby or a little overweight. A “partridge” is a type of small bird.

I wanted you to look at my **figure**; Haven't put on an ounce in 10 years.

A person's “figure” is the shape of their body. An “ounce” is a unit weight, or more specifically, 1/16th of a pound

Maybe I'll just take one tiny nip more, just to put the stopper on, so to speak.

In this case, a “nip” is a tiny drink, and a “stopper” is the last drink of the evening, though these are rare. “So to speak” is a way for the speaker to admit that they realize their choice of words is a bit strange or unusual.

She's just all shaken up and hot and dirty and tired.

If a person is “shaken up,” they are emotionally or physically upset or nervous because of something that has just happened.

You want it hot? :: Scalding.

If water is “scalding,” it is so hot that it will burn your skin on contact.

What kind of bed is this? One of those collapsible things?

If a bed is “collapsible,” it can be folded in such a way that it fits neatly into a narrow box or conveniently out of the way.

There's no door between the rooms; Will it be **decent**?

If a situation is “decent,” it is morally acceptable (The opposite is indecent, which means crude, vulgar or sexually immoral).

You're hoping I'll say I'll put up in a hotel.

To “put up” a person in a hotel is to have them stay there (Note that today, this phrasal verb requires a direct object ...i.e....they put *me* up at the hotel).

Will Stanley like me or will I just be a visiting in-law?

An in-law is any member of your wife's or husband's family.

He was blinded by all the brass.

This is a reference to all the military awards that are made of small pieces of brass or metal and that are worn on a uniform. It can also refer to the people of a high rank or position.

There were things to adjust myself to later on, such as his civilian background.

If a person "adjusts themselves" to a situation, they do what they can to accept it or get used to it. In this context, "civilian" refers to any person who is not in the military or an elected office, such as President or Senator.

How did he take it when you said I was coming.

In this context, "to take it" means to accept it or react to it.

He's on the road a good deal.

"He travels a lot."

I can hardly stand it when he's away for a night.

If a person can "hardly stand it," they can almost not accept it because they so strongly dislike it.

When he comes back, I cry in his lap like a baby.

A person's lap refers to the upper part of their legs when they are sitting.

You're bound to reproach me, but before you do, consider the fact that you left and I stayed and struggled.

If a person is "bound to" do something, it is almost certain they are going to do it. "To reproach" a person is to scold them or strongly criticize them.

I struggled at Belle Rive, trying to hold it together.

"Belle Rive" is the large farming property where Blanche and Stella grew up. In this case, "to hold it together" means to keep it as one large property, rather than selling pieces of it to others.

All the burden descended on my shoulders.

A "burden" is a large and difficult job or problem.

"To descend" on a person is to gently fall on to them.

You're a fine one to ask me how it went!

One way of saying "You have no right to ask me how it went."

I took the blows on my face and my body.

In this case, a word for strikes or hits.

All of those deaths, the long parade of the graveyard.

Another word for a cemetery, where dead bodies are buried.

You just came home for funerals, and funerals are pretty compared to deaths.
A “funeral” is an official ceremony to honor a dead person.

Death is expensive, and I, from my pitiful salary at the school.
If a person’s salary is “pitiful,” it is worthless or deserving of pity
(People will feel sorry for the person who earns so little money).

I let the place go?! And where were you? In there, with your polack!
In this context, “to let a place go” is to let it become old and run
down or even ruined. “Polack” is a very dated and insulting
racist slur for a person from Poland.

*Stanley and Blanche meet, talk about the loss of Belle Rive,
and quickly discover that they really don’t like each other.*

Where’s the little woman?
A ridiculously old-fashioned way for a man to refer to his wife.

Auriol? That’s not my territory.
“Auriol” is the small Louisiana town where Blanche
was living. “Territory” is another word for land.

Liquor goes fast in the hot weather; Want a shot?
A common way of referring to a gulp or small amount of hard liquor.

There’s some people that rarely touch it, but it touches them often.
This is Stanley’s way of saying that even if people
don’t drink, their lives are often effected by alcohol.

Mind if I make myself comfortable?...Be comfortable, that’s my motto.
If a person asks to “make themselves comfortable,” this often means
they want to get into clothes that are more casual or comfortable.
A “motto” is an expression that represents an important principle
or lesson in life, such as “A penny saved is a penny earned.”

I haven’t washed or even powdered, and here you are.
A dated verb that women would use when
they wanted to put on face powder or makeup.

You’re going to shack up here?
“To shack up” in a place is a very slangy way of saying to live there.

Travelling wears me out. :: Well, **take it easy**.
If something “wears out” a person, it tires or exhausts them. “Take it
easy” is a very common way of telling a person to calm down or relax.

I guess I'll strike you as being the unrefined type.

In this context, "to strike" a person is to appear to them as being a certain way. If a person is "unrefined," they're a bit crude, vulgar or uneducated.

Looks like she's fixing to stay a while.

"Fixing to" do something is a very old-fashioned way of saying planning to do it.

Is Stanley back with my trunk?

A large storage box or container.

I'm taking Blanche to Gallimore's for supper, then to a show, because it's poker night.

"Supper" is a somewhat old-fashioned word for a meal, specifically dinner. "Poker" is a popular card game in which people often gamble.

Isn't that just dandy?

A dated but fun way of saying excellent or very good.

She's soaking in a hot tub to quiet her nerves.

"To soak" is to sit in water, and a "tub" is another word for a bath. If a person is "quieting their nerves," they are trying to relax.

She's been through an ordeal. We've lost Belle Rive.

"To go through an ordeal" is to live through an emotionally exhausting or extremely upsetting experience, such as a violent attack.

I tried to gloss things over a little in my letters.

"To gloss over" something is to describe it in a general more attractive way than it is in reality (Here, Stella glossed over how poor her house is).

Let's skip back to the way you said the place was disposed of.

"To skip back" to a topic of conversation is to go back or return to it. "To dispose of" a piece of property is to sell it or get rid of it.

Sister, Blanche can't be annoyed with details right now.

To be "annoyed" is to be irritated or angered by something.

"Details" is an important word for exact facts or pieces of information.

Let's see the bill of sale....She didn't show you no papers, no deed, no nothing like that?!

A "bill of sale" is an official receipt for the sale of property such as a house.

A "deed" is an official paper showing who owns a piece of land or house (Note Stanley's uses of grammatically incorrect double negatives).

Have you heard of the Napoleonic code?

A system of laws that the state of Louisiana has used since the time of Napoleon, in the early 19th century.

Let me **enlighten** you on a point or two....That what belongs to the wife belongs to the husband, and vice versa.

"To enlighten" a person is to educate them so that they end up smarter or wiser. "Vice versa" means "and the exact opposite." Stanley is telling Stella he cares about Belle Rive, since under Louisiana law, he owns whatever share she owns.

I'll inquire if she's acquainted with the Napoleonic Code.

"To inquire" into something is to investigate or research it, and to be "acquainted with" something is to be familiar with it or know it.

It looks to me like you've been swindled....and when you get swindled, I get swindled too.

"To swindle" a person is to cheat them, usually by tricking them into giving up their money.

You have no idea how ridiculous you look when you suggest that my sister....could have perpetuated a swindle on you.

"To perpetuate a swindle" is a very formal and dated way of saying to cheat a person, or more colloquially, to rip them off.

Come on! Where's the money if the place was sold?!

The most versatile and important phrasal verb in the English language, here meaning "Stop being naïve and get serious!"

Will you look at these fine feathers and fur that she comes and preens herself in?

In this case, "fine feathers" is Stanley's way of referring to expensive clothes, and "fur" are clothes made from the fur or skin and hair of animals. "To preen" is to dress oneself in fine clothes.

I have an acquaintance who deals in this sort of merchandise and he's coming here to make an appraisal. :: Don't be such an **idiot!**

An "acquaintance" is a person that you know, but not really a friend. "To deal in" certain goods is to buy or sell them. "Merchandise" refers to any product that is sold in business, and an "appraisal" is an official estimate of what a certain product, such as a painting or expensive dress, is really worth. An "idiot" is an excellent word for a jerk, moron, ass, etc.

There's \$1,000 dollars invested in this **stuff!**

To invest" in something is to spend money on it. "Stuff" is a widely used word for things in general.

What is that?!---The treasure chest of a pirate?

A "treasure chest" is a box or container, often covered in jewelry, that contains lots of valuable things such as gold and rare coins. A "pirate" is a sailor who steal, robs and causes general trouble on the world's seas.

That's pearls, ropes of them. :: Is your sister a deep sea diver?!

A "pearl" is a much valued shiny stone found in the seas that is used as jewelry (Today, we say a *string* of pearls, not a rope of them).

A diamond crown for an empress.

A "crown" is the fancy headdress that represents the power of a king or queen. An "empress" is another word for a queen (An *emperor* is a king).

What is rhinestone? :: Next door to glass.

A type of stone used for imitation or inexpensive jewelry.

Here's your plantation, right here. :: You're being stupid and **horrid**.

A "plantation" was a large farm in the American South, often where slaves worked in cotton fields before the Civil War. "Horrid" is an excellent adjective meaning awful, disgusting or truly horrible.

The Kowalskis and the DuBois have a different notion on this.

A "notion" is another word for an idea or belief.

Indeed, they have, thank heavens.

"Indeed" is a much loved word in England for "in fact," and "thank heavens" is an old-fashioned but still used alternative for thank god.

You bet your life I'm going to stay here.

One way of saying "I'm 100% certain that..."

I understand there's going to be a card party tonight, to which we ladies are cordially not invited.

"Cordially" is a formal adverb that basically means politely.

She's out on the porch.

A covered area that is outside and immediately next to a building.

You men with your big **clumsy** fingers.

A good word that means physically awkward, or without grace or skill.

May I have a drag on your cigs?

A "drag" on a cigarette is a puff. "Cigs" is dated slang, though it may still be used in certain social circles (especially among smokers!)

Me and Stella was helping you unpack. :: You certainly did a fast and thorough job of it.

"Thorough" means complete (Note Stanley's bad verbal conjugations).

It certainly looks like you raided some **stylish** shops in Paris, Blanche.

"To raid" a shop is to aggressively go in and buy a lot of things (This is actually a military verb meaning to quickly attack). If a shop is "stylish," it sells popular and generally expensive and fashionable goods.

They were a tribute from an admirer of mine.

:: He must have had a lot of admiration.

A "tribute" is a gift that is given as a show of respect.

"To admire" a person is to greatly respect or like them.

You think it's possible that I was once considered to be **attractive**? :: Your looks are OK.

"Attractive" is a very common and general adjective meaning good looking, pleasant or pleasing. A person's "looks" are their physical qualities, such as their skin color, weight and general level of beauty.

I was fishing for a compliment. :: I don't go in for that stuff.

"To fish for a compliment" is to say things that you hope will cause the person you're talking with to say something nice about you. "To go in for" something is to be interested in it, or agree to participate in it.

I haven't met a dame yet who didn't know if she were **good looking** or not without being told.

A "dame" is a ridiculously dated word for a woman (don't use it!).

"Good looking" is the most common alternative to pretty or beautiful.

I once went out with a dame who told me I'm the glamorous type.

If a person is "the glamorous type," they like to be involved with fashionable and expensive things such as fine clothes, food and travel.

I shut her up like a clam.

A "clam" is a type of sea shell that is usually tightly closed.

Some men are took in by this Hollywood glamour stuff and some just aren't.

If a person is "taken in" by something, they are fooled, seduced by, or attracted to it (note Stanley's incorrect past participle). Here, "Hollywood glamour stuff" refers to the attraction or allure of Hollywood movie stars.

I can't be any witch of a woman casting a spell on you.

A "witch" is usually an old ugly woman with magical powers who often flies on a broom stick. "To cast a spell" on a person is to magically effect their lives, often my making sure they suffer from horrible bad luck.

You're simple, **straightforward** and honest. A little bit on the primitive side.

A person who is "straightforward" is honest and direct. If a person is "on the primitive side," they act in a way that is uneducated or unrefined, almost like a caveman.

To interest you, a woman would have to...

:: Would have to lay her cards on the table.

If a person "lays their cards on the table," they say exactly what they are thinking or show exactly what they have to offer in a relationship.

I never did care for wishy-washy people.

A “wishy-washy” person is unclear, or one who always has trouble deciding or making up their minds.

Run to the drug store and get me a lemon coke with chipped ice.

If ice is “chipped,” it is broken into small pieces.

Alright Mr. Kowalski, let us proceed without any more digression.

“To proceed” is to move forward, and a “digression” is a conversation or talk that moves far away from what was originally being discussed.

You have an impossible judicial air!

“Judicial” is an adjective that refers to the legal or court system, and in this case, an “air” is a way of being or manner of thinking or acting.

I know I fib a good deal. After all, a woman’s charm is 50% illusion.

“To fib” is to lie or mislead. An “illusion” is something that is misleading or perhaps even not real, though people think they actually see it.

Some love letters, yellowing with antiquity.

“To yellow” is to turn yellow color with age. “Antiquity” refers to the very distant past, such as the time of ancient Rome or Greece.

Don’t pull that stuff!

Here, a slangy way of saying “Don’t try to cheat or manipulate me!”

I’m not young and vulnerable anymore.

If a person is “vulnerable,” they are weak or unable to defend themselves from other people or dangers.

I must have lost my head for a moment.

If a person “loses their head,” they start to act in a crazy manner.

Everyone has something they won’t let others touch because of their intimate nature.

If something has an “intimate nature,” it is considered very personal or private and thus should not be seen by others.

A firm that made loans on the place. ∴ It was lost on a mortgage?!

A “firm” is a company or business, in this case related to banking and real estate loans. A “mortgage” is a loan that a bank gives to a person so that they can buy a house or piece of property.

I don’t want no ifs, ands or buts.

A still common and interesting expression that refers to any possible exception or problem that could prevent something from happening. Another way of saying “Just do it; I don’t want any excuses.”

Piece by piece, our improvident grandfathers exchanged the land for their epic debauches, to put it mildly.

“Improvident” is an educated word meaning irresponsible or wasteful or with little concern for the future. An “epic” is a grand story or something of great size. “Debauchery” is great decadence or sexual immorality, but it is rarely if ever used like Blanche does above. “To put it mildly” is a way for the speaker to say the truth or reality is much worse than the gentle way it had just been described.

All that was left, and Stella can verify that, was the house itself and 20 acres of ground, including a graveyard, to which all but Stella and I have retreated.

An “acre” is a unit of measurement for land, about the size of a city block. The last part of the sentence is Blanche’s way of saying that everyone who had lived at Belle Rive except her and Stella have now died.

All the papers, I hearby endow you with them.

Take them, peruse them, commit them to memory.

“Hereby” means “by this way,” and “to endow” a person with something is to officially give it to them. “To peruse” a book or document is to read it very slowly and carefully.

It’s wonderfully fitting that Belle Rive should be this bunch of papers in your big, capable hands.

If something is “fitting,” it is appropriate, just or right.

If a person (or their hands) is “capable,” they are skilled and competent and able to do a lot of practical things.

I got a lawyer acquaintance; We’ll straighten this out.

An “acquaintance” is a person you know, but not really a friend.

“To straighten out” a situation is to fix it or make it better.

Blanche, under the Napoleonic Code, a man has got to take interest in his wife’s affairs, especially now that she’s gonna have a baby.

In this case, a person’s “affairs” refers to their business dealings, money and investments.

Mitch meets Blanche and is immediately charmed, tension grows between Stella and Stanley, and Blanche tries to convince Stella that Stanley is simply too “common” to be her husband.

We thrashed it out. I feel a little bit shaky, but I handled it nicely.

“To thrash out” a conversation is to argue forcefully over a period of time before coming to some kind of an agreement. If a person feels “shaky,” they feel nervous or weak. “To handle” a situation is to take care of it.

Yes, I was flirting with your husband, Stella.

“To flirt” with a person is to behave in a suggestive, sexual or romantic way with them.

I guess he's just not the type that goes for jasmine perfume.

In this case, "to go for" something is to like it. "Jasmine" is a type of popular plant that has very nice smelling flowers.

You go upstairs and tell her to **cut that out**.

An excellent way of telling a person to stop whatever it is they are doing.

Come on, what d'ya say?

A slangy way of saying "please!"

Every time you win a pot, you're out!

In poker, the "pot" is the chips that represent money. In this context, if a person is "out," they do not want to play the next round of cards.

You tell them guys the kettle is on the stove.

A "kettle" is an old word for a metal container for boiling water.

Let me powder. I look hot and **frazzled**. Do I look done in?

"To powder" is to put powder or make up on your face. "Frazzled" is an excellent adjective which means physically or emotionally exhausted, wiped out or in a state of extreme nervous tension.

You look fresh as a daisy. :: One that's been picked a few days.

A "daisy" is popular and pretty flower.

Why don't somebody go to the Chinaman's and bring back a chop suey?

An incredibly dated line! "Chinaman" sounds awful today, and regardless, one would just say the Chinese restaurant. "Chop suey" was what people thought of when they thought of Chinese food back then, but today Dim Sum, and Kung Pao chicken are much more common!

I see your boys are all still at it.

To be "still at" something is to be still doing it after a long time.

Poker is so fascinating; Could I **kibitz**?

A much disliked verb which means to give advice to a person playing a game, often when that advice is not wanted or appreciated.

You should call it quits after one more hand.

"To call it quits" is to stop playing or working.

In poker, a "hand" is a round of cards.

My nerves are in knots. Is the bathroom occupied?

If a person's "nerves are in knots," they are extremely worried or nervous (A knot is the lump or ball formed by rope or string tied together). If a room is "occupied," it is being used (This is very formal).

She appreciated you sending over that custard.
A sweet and delicious desert made with eggs.

Is he a wolf?
In this case, a dated word for a playboy or woman chaser.

He's on the precision bench in the spare parts department.
"Precision" refers to the state of being exact or precise, and thus in a factory, this would have to do with making sure things are being produced correctly. "Spare parts" are individual small parts that are needed for complicated machines like cars and computers.

Stanley is the only one in his crowd that is likely to get anywhere.
Stella's way of saying he is more likely than his friends to become a true success in life.

You're standing in the light. :: Am I?! Gracious!
This is one of Stella's favorite words, and basically means "Oh my God!"

You ought to see their wives. Big beefy things, I suppose.
"Beefy" is an interesting adjective meaning muscular or physically thick.

Cut out that cackling in there!
"Cut out" means to stop, and "to cackle" is to make a loud and annoying noise, like a hen (which is a type of farm bird).

I told you to hush up!
An interesting phrasal verb meaning to be quiet.

Don't start a row!
A rare but still used word for a loud argument

Two **bucks**. :: I'm out.
A "buck" is the most common colloquial word for a dollar.
If you are "out" in a poker game, you decide to stop playing.

What the heck were you doing?!
A gentle and old-fashioned version of "the hell," which is commonly added to Wh questions to show emotion such as anger or surprise.

I was looking through the drapes.
Another word for curtains.

We're dealing this hand over again. :: Deal me out.
"To deal" a hand in poker is to pass out the cards to each player. If a player wants to be "dealt out," they don't want to play in that hand or round.

There is an inscription.

Words that are printed in a piece of jewelry, a book or other object.

I can't make it out.

In this case, "to make out" some words means to be able to read them.

That's my favorite sonnet by Mr. Burns.

A type of poem.

She must have been very fond of you.

To be "fond of" a person is to like them very much.

Sorrow makes for sincerity. :: It brings it out in people.

"Sorrow" is great sadness, and "sincerity" is true emotional honesty. The second sentence is a way of saying sorrow causes people to be sincere.

It means white wood, like an orchid in Spring.

An "orchid" is a type of flower (In French, "Blanche Dubois" literally means white wood).

Stella is my precious little sister.

A powerful adjective meaning of great value, or much loved.

I bought this adorable little paper lantern.

A "lantern" is a small portable light with a protective covering.

I'd be glad to. :: I can't stand a naked light bulb any more than a rude remark or a vulgar action.

If a person is "glad," they are happy or pleased. A "rude remark" is an insulting or insensitive statement, and if something is "vulgar," it is rude, crude or offensive.

I guess we strike you as being a pretty rough bunch.

In this case, "rough" means uneducated, loud and even violent.

I'm very adaptable to circumstances.

If a person is "adaptable," they can easily adapt or get used to something that might be difficult. "Circumstances" are the facts of a situation.

Thank you. I appreciate your gallantry.

An old word for old-fashioned politeness or chivalry to women.

Coming!! :: Gracious, what lung power!

"Coming" is the word to use when you're called to the dinner table and you want to say you'll be there in a second. The second sentence is Blanche's way of saying that Stanley can scream very loudly (A person's lungs are the organs used for breathing).

Never arithmetic. I don't know the multiplication tables.

"Arithmetic" is another word for math, and the "multiplication tables" refer to the list of numbers multiplied together ($8 \times 5 = 40$, $9 \times 5 = 45$, etc.)

I try to instill a bunch of bobby soxers and drug store Romeos with a reverence for Hawthorne and Whitman and Poe.

"To instill" a person with something is to fill them with it. "Bobby soxers" and "drug store Romeos" are dated and never used expressions for young teenagers. "To have "reverence for" a person is to have great respect for them (Hawthorne, Whitman and Poe are great 19th century American writers).

Their literary heritage is not what they treasure above all.

A nation's "literary heritage" refers to the great writers they have produced over time. "To treasure" something is to value it highly.

It's touching to notice them making their first discovery of love, as if nobody had ever known it before.

"Touching" means sweet or capable of causing emotions of tenderness or compassion. This is Blanche's way of talking about young teenage love.

We've made enchantment.

A feeling of magical attraction.

Lunacy! Complete lunacy!

A strong word meaning complete craziness or insanity.

Stella :: You quit that hollering and go to bed.

"To holler" is to scream or yell.

You're gonna get the law on you! You can't beat up a woman and then call her back.

Note that "going to" ---> "gonna" in rapid speech.

"To beat up" a person is to physically attack and hurt them.

They'll haul you in like last time.

"To haul" in a person is to physically drag them, or in this case, to force them to come into the police station.

I wouldn't mix in this.

"To get mixed *up*" in a situation is to get involved in it, but 'mixed' alone is no longer ever used.

I'm **terrified**. :: There's nothing to be scared of.

A powerful adjective meaning extremely scared.

I'm not properly dressed.

To be "properly dressed" is to be wearing clothes that are appropriate or correct for the time and place.

Thank you for being so kind.

An interesting alternative to genuinely nice, or gentle and helpful.

He's going to get the car greased?

Today, you're more likely to say 'oiled.'

Stanley's always smashed things.

"To smash" something is to physically crush or destroy it, usually with great force or violence.

He snatched off one of my slippers and rushed around smashing light bulbs.

"To snatch" something is to forcefully take or grab it ("Snatched off" is rarely said today). "Slippers" are shoes that are easily slipped on the foot.

I was sort of thrilled by it.

To be "thrilled" is to be excited or emotionally touched by something.

You're so **matter-of-fact** about it all, Stella.

If a person has a "matter-of-fact" attitude about something, they act as if it's not important or exciting, even though others think it is.

It didn't land on the pavement, so only one tube was smashed.

"Pavement" is the hard rock or asphalt used to make streets. A "tube" is an important electronic device or object found in radios, TVs, etc...

Pull yourself together! Face the facts!

The first sentence is telling the listener to calm down, and the second one is telling them to accept the reality of the situation, even if difficult to do.

You're married to a madman!

A fun little word for a crazy person.

I wish you'd stop taking it for granted that I'm in something I want to get out of.

"To take something for granted" is to assume it will always be there, even though things could change, or, as in this case, it means to believe something is true that others believe or say is in fact not true.

You saw him first in uniform, an officer.

Here, a "uniform" refers to the clothes of a military officer, such as captain or sergeant.

We're talking about his desire, that brutal desire. The name of that streetcar that bangs through the quarter.

"Brutal desire" is Blanche's way of referring to Stanley's crude and even violent sexual desires. "To bang through" a place is to go through it while making a lot of noise, and here, the "quarter" refers to The French Quarter, which is the famous New Orleans neighborhood where Stanley and Stella live.

Don't you think your superior attitude is a little out of place?

If a person has a "superior attitude," they look down on other people and are generally self-righteous or arrogant.

I can't help you trembling if you insist on trembling.

"To tremble" is to shake, either from fear of cold.

May I speak plainly?

An old-fashioned way of saying frankly, or very honestly.

If you'll forgive me...he's common.

This is Blanche's snobby way of saying that Stanley is crude, uneducated and vulgar. "Common" is rarely used that way today.

Surely you couldn't have forgotten that much of our upbringing that you suppose that there's any part of a gentleman in his nature.

"Surely" is an alternative to obviously. A "person's" upbringing refers to how they were raised as a child, and in this context, a "gentleman" is a refined or well behaved man. This is Blanche's way of telling Stella that they come from a social class that is much higher than Stanley's.

He has an animal's habits. There's even something subhuman about him.

"Subhuman" is a dangerous word that racists have used to describe groups of people they do not consider truly human (It literally means "below human").

There he is!: Stanley Kowalski, survivor of the stone age, bearing the raw meat from the killing of the jungle.

The "stone age" refers to the times of the cavemen, before civilization. "To bear" meat (or gifts!) is to carry or transport it.

Maybe he'll strangle you, or grunt, or kiss you.

"To strangle" a person is to choke them to death by cutting off their air.

"To grunt" is to make a deep sound, like a pig or hog ("ugh!!").

Maybe we are a long way from being made in God's image.

A religious expression among Christians which says that humans were made to look like God (An image is a painting, photo or reflection).

In some kinds of people, some tenderer feelings have had some little beginnings that we've got to make grow and cling to and hold....

"Tender" means gentle, soft or sweet, but 'tenderer' is never used!

"To cling to" something is to try and hold on or stick to it.

...as our flag in the dark march to whatever it is we're approaching.

This is Blanche's ridiculously poetic way of saying that educated people need to encourage music, painting and the arts, even though people like Stanley are leading humanity to a horrible, uncivilized future.

Don't hang back with the brutes!

"To hang back" with a group is to stay behind with them, and a "brute" is a strongly insulting word for a crude, uneducated and violent person.

*Stanley grows ever more suspicious of Blanche
while his best friend Mitch falls in love with her.*

That jerk mechanic down at Fritz' doesn't know his axle grease from 3rd base.

A "jerk" is an idiot, moron, ass, etc (Here it's used as an adjective, which is rare). "Axle grease" is a type of grease or lubricant used on car axles, which are steel rods that allow the wheels to turn.

Blanche is making some new slip covers.

Coverings for a pillow.

That no-good, rotten...

A fun way of referring to an evil, awful or horrible person (Here, "rotten" means horrible, though it can refer to spoiled food).

I can't find nothing around this dump anymore.

A common way of referring to a poor and dirty home.

I bet you were born under Aires. Aires people are forceful, **dynamic**.

They dote on noise. They love to bang things around.

"Aires" is one of the 12 astrological signs that deal with birth dates and the stars (Along with Capricorn, Aquarius, etc...) If a person is "dynamic," they are active and have lots of energy. "To dote" on something is to give it a lot of attention and affection. "To bang things around" is to make a lot of noise by hitting or moving various objects.

Do you happen to know somebody named Shaw?

"Happen to" is a common way of saying by chance ("Is it possible you know...?")

This Shaw is under the impression he met you in Auriol.

A widely used way of saying to believe.

But I figure he must have got you mixed up with some other party.

"To mix up" one person with another is to confuse the two so you think one is actually the other. Here, a "party" is a person.

The Hotel Flamingo is not a place that I'd dare to be seen in.

In this case, "to dare" to do something is to have the courage to do it (This is Blanche's way of saying that she would not want to be seen in a hotel with such a poor reputation).

The odor of cheap perfume is penetrating.

“Odor” is another word for smell, and if a smell is “penetrating,” it is very strong or powerful (To penetrate is to push into or through).

Is that stuff expensive? :: 12 dollars an ounce, but I’m nearly out. That’s just a hint if you want to remember.

A liquid “ounce” is 1/16th of a pint. A “hint” of something is just a very small amount of it.

I figure he must have got you mixed up, but he goes in and out of Auriol all the time.

“To figure” is to think or believe.

See you at the Four Deuces. :: Don’t I rate a kiss?

The “Four Deuces” is a card club (A deuce is one of the four types of cards). In this case, “to rate” is to deserve.

You haven’t heard any unkind gossip about me?

If talk is “unkind,” it is mean spirited or not nice. “Gossip” refers to rumors, loose talk and chatter about other people, which may or may not be true.

I haven’t been awfully good since Belle Rive started to slip through my fingers.

If something “slips through your fingers,” you accidentally let it go or lose it.

I was never self-sufficient enough; Soft people have got to court the favor of hard ones.

If a person is “self-sufficient,” they can take care of themselves without the help of others. “To court the favor” of others is an old-fashioned way of saying to treat them well and in a friendly manner so that they will help you later (For Blanche, there are soft and hard people, but this isn’t used).

You’ve got a shimmer and a glow. :: I don’t know how much longer I can turn the trick.

If a person has a “shimmer” or “glow,” they have a certain energy that makes them shine or look bright and healthy. “To turn the trick” is a slangy way of saying to keep doing something that is difficult.

It isn’t enough to be soft. You’ve got to be soft and attractive, and I’m fading now.

For Blanche, “soft” means warm and sweet. “Attractive” means pretty or good looking, and if a person is “fading,” they are starting to lose their attraction or energy, the way a flower grows old and slowly dies.

I never listen to you when you’re being morbid.

A powerful adjective that refers to depressing or gloomy talk, especially related to disease and death.

I like to wait on you, Blanche. It makes it seem more like home.
 “To wait” on a person is to bring them things they want, such as what a waiter does for customers in a restaurant.

I know you hate me to talk sentimental, but believe me, I feel more than I say.
 If a person is being “sentimental,” they are being very emotional or nostalgic about people and places from their past.

I won’t hang around ‘til he throws me out!
 “To hang around” a place is to stay there doing nothing in particular, or in this case, to actually be living there.

Heavens...use my hankie. Blot, gently.
 “Heavens” is an old-fashioned way expressing emotion such as surprise. A “hankie” is a handkerchief, the cloth some people use to wipe their noses. “To blot” is to dry, by gently touching a cloth that absorbs wet ink.

Did it stain? :: Not a bit.
 “To stain” clothes is to discolor, or get them dirty with a marking or spot.

Mitch is coming; I’m a little nervous about our relations.
 “Relations” is an old-fashioned way of saying relationship.

Why are you so sensitive about your age? ::
 The hard knocks that my vanity has been given.
 “Hard knocks” are experiences that have hurt, both physical and emotional, such as insults from other people. A person’s “vanity” is their pride, or their belief that they are prettier or better than they really are.

He thinks I’m sort of prim and proper, you know.
 An interesting expression to describe a person who is very conservative, stiff or formal in dress and behavior.

I didn’t know stars took up collections.
 “To take up a collection” is to try and raise money for a charitable cause (Blanche is talking about the newspaper called The Evening Star).

I was joking, feebly.
 A sad little adverb meaning weakly, or without energy.

I don’t have a dime. I’m not the lady of the house.
 A “dime” is a coin worth 10 cents, and “the lady of the house” is a stupid but still used expression to describe the mother or wife in a home.

It’s temperamental.
 If a machine is temperamental, it is easily broken or often does not work the way it’s supposed to (If a person is temperamental, they are easily put in a bad mood).

An hour isn't an hour, but a little piece of eternity, dropped in our hands.
 "Eternity" is an interesting little word that means forever. This sentence is Blanche's ridiculous and overly poetic way of talking about time.

You're going to make my mouth water.
 An interesting verb!; Your mouth will "water"
 if you see delicious looking food you want to eat.

Bow to me first!
 "To bow" is to bend one's body in front of someone as a sign of respect.

I spoiled it for you.
 "To spoil" an evening is to harm, destroy or ruin it.

I simply couldn't rise to the occasion, that's all.
 If a person "rises to the occasion," they do what they have to do to make it a success, even if that is very difficult.

I've never tried so hard to be gay and made such a dismal mess of it.
 Note that in the 1950s, "gay" still meant happy or joyous, not homosexual. "Dismal" means depressing or gloomy, and "to make a mess" of something is to ruin it, or at least make it worse than before.

All in a bunch going home from their little bridge party.
 Here, a "bunch" is a small group, and "bridge" is a type of card game.

I liked the kiss very much; It was the other familiarity that I felt obliged to discourage.
 If a person is "obliged to" do something, they are forced or expected to do it. This is Blanche's ridiculous way of saying she did not want to do anything more sexual with Mitch beyond kiss him.

Not that I resented it. I was flattered that you....desired me.
 "To resent" something is to feel angry or bitter about it.
 If a person feels "flattered," they are happy (and perhaps a bit embarrassed) that someone else has said something very positive or complimentary to say about them.

A single girl alone in the world has got to keep a firm hold on her emotions or she'll be lost.
 In this case, "firm" means strong or steady.

Come on, let's finish our night cap.
 The last drink of the night before going to sleep.

You've been so anxious and solemn all evening.
 If a person is "anxious," they are very nervous or worried. "Solemn" means very serious, in a way a priest is when giving a sermon in church.

I want to create joie de vivre.

A French expression used in English which means great happiness, or literally, joy of life.

I'm going to be very bohemian.

A "bohemian" is a person who rejects a normal middle class life, often in order to travel aimlessly, discuss politics in cafes and write poetry.

I'm ashamed of the way I perspire.

"To perspire" is a formal way of saying to sweat.

A man with a heavy build has to be careful what he puts on, so he don't look too clumsy.

If a man has a "heavy build," he is big boned and generally big and muscular. If a person is "clumsy," they are physically awkward and often unskilled or uncoordinated (In sports, they often drop the ball!)

You're not the delicate type; You have a massive bone structure and a very imposing physique.

"The delicate type" is a person who is physically small or fragile.

"Massive" means very big or huge. If a person has an "imposing physique," they have a body type that is big, strong or intimidating.

I work out there with the weights. I swim, I keep myself fit.

"To work out" is to exercise, and "weights" are the heavy metal objects that people lift to grow their muscles. If a person is "fit," they are in good physical shape.

A man can punch me in the belly and it don't hurt me.

"To punch" a person is to hit or strike them with a closed fist.

Guess how much I weigh. :: I'd say in the vicinity of 180 pounds.

One way of saying "about" (Vicinity means the local area).

That's what I weigh stripped. :: Oh my goodness, it's awe-inspiring.

If a person is "stripped," they have no clothes on. If something is "awe-inspiring," it is has the power to completely amaze, shock or transfix people.

I said unhand me, Sir. You must behave like a gentleman.

"To unhand" a person is to release or let them go.

Give me a slap whenever I step out of bounds.

"To slap" a person is to strike them with your open hand. If a person does something that is "out of bounds," it is considered wrong, unacceptable or inappropriate.

I don't want you to think I'm severe or old-maidish.

In this case, "severe" means very mean or strict. If a woman is "old-maidish," she acts like an unattractive old woman.

They were planning to take in a midnight preview.

"To take in" a movie is to go out and see it, and a "midnight preview" is a movie shown at midnight, that has not yet been released to the public.

The way you talk, I suspect that he has.

"To suspect" something is to believe it is likely or probable that something is true.

I think he don't understand you. :: That's putting it mildly.

In this case, a fun way of saying "what you just said is true, but in fact you could have said it much more directly or forcefully."

Of course there is the hostility.

"Hostility" is great anger or bitter emotion toward a person.

Were you sincere about that?

If a person is "sincere," they are being completely honest.

She wants to see my settle down before.... ::

You'll be lonely when she passes on, won't you?

"To settle down" often means to find a husband or wife to marry, or to move into a house and perhaps have kids. "To pass on" means to die, though today it's more common to say pass *away*.

I was unlucky, deluded.

If a person is "deluded," they believe things that are clearly not true.

I didn't know anything except that I loved him...unendurably.

An interesting word, though it's never used; "To endure" is to last, even through hard times, and thus "unendurably" means to not last long.

Suddenly, the boy I had married broke away from me and ran out of the casino. A few minutes later, a shot!

"To break away" from a person is to physically pull or run away from them. Here, a "shot" is a bullet from a gun (and not a drink of liquor!)

All ran and gathered around the terrible thing at the edge of the lake.

If people "gather around," they form a group in one place.

He's stuck a revolver in his mouth, and fired.

"To stick" something in your mouth is to put or place it there, and a "revolver" is a small gun.

I'd said "You're weak. I've lost respect for you. I despise you."

"To despise" a person is to hate them with great emotion or intensity.

Could it be you and me Blanche?

Mitch's way of asking Blanche if they were meant to be with each other.

*Mitch learns a hard truth , Stella has her baby,
and Stanley and Blanche have their final battle.*

If you want to mess with me, come on!

"To mess with" a person is a slangy way of saying to get involved with them in such a way that you anger or provoke them.

You don't have to wise me up!

"To wise up" is to start thinking more intelligently, but it's rarely used with a direct object (A wise *person* is smart).

We've got some bucks to make around here.

The most common way to say dollars.

It's a Barnum and Bailey world, just as phony as can be.

"Barnum and Baily" is a famous circus company. "Phony" means fake, false or not genuine or real (like a phony diamond).

Some canary bird.

A small bird that sings. Note that the use of 'some' means the speaker is saying "This canary bird is hopeless (or ridiculous, pathetic, etc.).

You know your sister is no lily.

A plant, and sometimes used to mean someone who is young, pure and innocent.

You should know the line that she's been feeding to Mitch!

In this case, a "line" is a story or excuse that is a complete lie.

She's as famous in Auriol as if she was the President of the United States, although she's not respected by any party.

Stanley's cynical way of saying that Blanche is well known as being a crazy person in her home town. Note that here, a 'party' refers to a political party, such as the Democrats or Republicans.

The Flamingo is a second class hotel, which has the advantage of not interfering with the private and social life of the personalities there.

"To interfere" with a person is to stop them from doing what they want to do. In this case, "personalities" just means people.

The Flamingo has all kinds of goings-ons, but even the management of the Flamingo was impressed by Dame Blanche.

"Goings-ons" is an interesting word for events or activities. "Dame" means woman, but this was very old-fashioned even in 1950!

I know this is going to upset you, but she pulled the wool over your eyes just as much as Mitch's.

"To pull the wool over a person's eyes" is to fool or trick them.

They wised up, after two or three times, they'd quit, and she'd go get another one.

"To wise up" is to get smarter.

The same old line, the same old act and the same old **hooey**.

In this case, a "line" is a lie or bad excuse. "Hooey" is an excellent word for nonsense, or more crudely, bullshit.

She became the town character, regarded as not just different, but downright loco and nuts!

In this context, a "character" is a strange or crazy person, and if they are "regarded" that way, they're seen that way. "Downright" means completely or absolutely. "Loco" is a Spanish word that means crazy, and "nuts" is a widely used slang word that also means crazy or insane.

A 17 year old kid she got mixed up with. The boy's dad learned about it and he got in touch with his superintendent.

Here, "to get mixed up" with a person is to become romantically or sexually involved with them. "To get in touch with" a person is to contact or communicate with them, and a school's "superintendent" is the person in charge of running it.

There was practically a town ordinance passed against her. Another word for a law or regulation.

Not so terribly long! Possess your soul in patience!

"To possess" is to own or take control of, and a person's "soul" is the non-physical part of them that lives on after they die (In theory!).

Mitch is a buddy of mine---We was together in the 241st engineers. We work in the same plant!

A "buddy" is a common word for friend. The "241st engineers" was the name of the division in the army where Mitch and Stanley served during World War 2. In this case, a "plant" is a factory (a 'manufacturing plant').

You bet your hat I told him!

A silly way of saying "You can be certain that..."

I would have that on my conscience if I knew that stuff and let my best friend get caught! :: Is Mitch through with her?

A person's "conscience" is their sense of right and wrong, or the guilt they feel if they do something wrong. If a person is "through with" someone, they no longer want to have anything to do with them.

He's not going to jump into a tank with a school of sharks.
 Here, a "tank" is a large container of water,
 and a "school" refers to a group of fish.

But on what on earth will she do?!
 A strange but still used filler, which is used
 to express emotion such as anger or surprise.

Her future is mapped out for her.
 If a person's future is "mapped out," it is already planned.

A hot bath and a long cold drink always
 gives me a brand new outlook on life.
 An "outlook" is a general view or way of looking at things.

We're all so solemn; Is it because I've been **stood up** by my beau?
 "Solemn" means very serious and somber. If you are "stood up,"
 you have a date or meeting with somebody, but they fail to come or
 show up. A "beau" is a silly and rarely used French word for a boyfriend.

I didn't think you liked my stories. ∴ I like
 them when they're amusing, but not indecent.
 If a story is "amusing," it's fun and entertaining, but if it's "indecent,"
 it is crude or vulgar, often because of some sexual content.

I don't know any refined enough for your taste.
 "Refined" means educated and cultured (as opposed to crude or vulgar).

Let's see; I have to run through my repitoir.
 A singer's "repitoir" are the set of songs that they
 have practiced over and over again for a concert.

This parrot curse a blue streak and knew
 more vulgar expressions than Mr. Kowalski.
 A "parrot" is a type of bird that is famous for repeating what humans
 say. "To curse a blue streak" means to use a lot of vulgar or dirty words.
 This is old-fashioned, though to curse is still used as a simple verb.

Mr. Kowalski is too busy making a pig of himself to think of anything else.
 Note that a pig is the animal that is most commonly used to describe a
 person who is dirty or disgusting (Which is unfair, since pigs are clean!).

Your face and your fingers are **disgusting**, greasy.
 "Disgusting" is a powerful and common adjective meaning offensive,
 extremely dirty or gross. "Greasy" refers to anything covered in grease,
 which is a type of slippery animal fat.

Don't you ever talk that way to me!
 "Do not use those words with me!"

Pig, polack, disgusting, vulgar, greasy!

The various insult words Blanche uses to describe Stanley. All are still used today except polack, which is a dated epithet for a person from Poland.

Just remember what Huey Long said, that every man is a king, and I'm the king around here.

A well known expression is that every man is the king of his own home (Huey Long was a famous Louisiana politician in the 1930s).

My place is all cleared up.

If a place is "cleared up," all the junk and other things have been removed.

I hope you're pleased with your doings.

To be "pleased" with something is to be happy about it. "Doings" is a dated word for actions that took place in the past.

I hope candles will glow in his life.

"To glow" is to shine in the dark.

I take hot baths for my nerves; Hydrotherapy they call it.

A very modern sounding word (for a 1953 film!) to describe the use of water and baths as a type of medicine or relaxation exercise.

How can you possibly know what anxiety feels like?

An important word for great nervousness or worry.

Why do you look at me with that pitying look?

A "pitying" look is the look a person has for somebody they feel sorry for because they look so poor or desperate.

I got a little birthday remembrance for you.

A little gift to help a person remember a place or person.

Nobody was as tender and as trusting as she was.

If a person is "tender," they are sweet and gentle, and if they are "trusting," they too easily believe what others tell them.

You showed me a snapshot of a place with columns.

A "snapshot" is a somewhat dated word for a photograph.

Hoity-toity and describing me like an ape!

An interesting adjective that means snobby or marked by an air of self-importance.

Coming!

The word to say when called to the dinner table!

I shouldn't let you in after the treatment
I received this evening. So utterly uncavalier!

In this case, "treatment" means bad or rude behavior. "Utterly" is a good alternative to totally or completely, and "uncavalier" is a silly and dated word for rude, crude or vulgar ("Cavalier" used to mean very polite and chivalrous, particularly with respect to how men treated women).

Oh my my, what a cold shoulder!

"Oh my my" is a way of expressing surprise or other emotion. To give someone "a cold shoulder" is to treat them very badly, usually in a snobby manner and sometimes by even ignoring them.

You stopped that polka tune in my head.

"Polka" is a type of European folk dance, and a "tune" is a song.

Let's turn it off. I'm not partial to them.

To be "partial to" a type of music is to like or enjoy it.

Some things on the premises are actually mine.

Another word for real property, such as a house or land.

Never mine--I won't cross-examine the witness.

"Never mine" is what you say if you decide you don't want to talk about something you had started to talk about. "To cross examine" a person is to ask them many questions in a trial, often in front of a jury. A "witness" is a person who is called to testify or answer questions during a trial, or more generally, a person who happens to see or observe an event.

Are you boxed out of your mind?

If a person is "out of their mind," they are crazy or insane (though note that boxed in this expression is no longer used).

I've practically given you up; Had you forgotten your invitation to dinner?

Today, you would say "given up *on* you," which means that the speaker has decided that you were so late that there was no hope that you would ever arrive.

It's terribly sweet. I believe it's liqueur.

Note that as an adverb, "terribly" means very. A "liqueur" is a type of very sweet and smooth alcoholic drink, often used in desserts.

He says you've been lapping it up all summer like a wild cat.

"To lap up" a drink is to drink it with great enthusiasm, perhaps the way a thirsty cat uses its tongue to bring the liquid into its mouth.

I don't descend to the level of this cheap accusation.

"To descend" is to go down, and a "cheap accusation" is to accuse a person of having done something horrible, often without any evidence or reason to believe it is true.

There's an obscure meaning here.

If something is "obscure," it is not clearly seen or understood.

You don't need to be insulting. :: No, just realistic.

If a person is "insulting," they are saying things that are likely to offend or hurt the person they're speaking to.

I do not misrepresent things. I tell what *ought* to be truth. If that is sinful, then I should be punished for it.

If something is "sinful," it is considered immoral in the eyes of God.

All of this is Blanche's interesting way of looking at truth and lies.

That pitch about your ideals being so old-fashioned and all that malarkey you've dished out all summer!

In this case, a "pitch" is the words used to justify or excuse something.

"Ideals" are a person's most basic principles or moral beliefs, and

"malarkey" is an interesting word for nonsense, or more crudely, bullshit.

"To dish out" a lot of nonsense is to keep saying it over a period of time.

I knew you weren't 16, but I was fool enough to believe you were straight!

In this case, a person who is "straight" is one who always tells the truth.

I talked directly long-distance to this merchant in Auriol.

A "merchant" is a businessman who buys and sells various goods.

He whistled at me, I put him in his place, and now for revenge, he's making up stories.

If you put a person "in their place," you tell them very directly that they are not as important as they think they are, or you make them feel much less confident than they had. To take "revenge" is to hurt or harm a person who has hurt or harmed you. "To make up" a story is to create it from nothing, and then pretend it is true even though it is not.

The Tarantula Arms! :: Yes, a big spider; That's where I brought my victims.

A "tarantula" is a dangerous spider (though here it's just part of the hotel's name), A "victim" is a person who has been hurt or mistreated in some way, often by another person.

It was panic that drove me from one to another searching for protection...in the most unlikely places.

Blanche's way of saying places where she never thought she would find herself, such as cheap hotels with strange men.

Somebody wrote the superintendent about it, saying

"This woman is morally unfit for her position."

If a person is "morally unfit" for something, they are not moral, ethical or honest enough to have it. In this case, a "position" is a job.

I was played out...my youth was gone up the water spout.

A rare phrasal verb meaning exhausted or completely out of energy. A "spout" is a pipe or faucet through which liquid goes.

You seemed gentle....a cleft in the rock of the world that I could hide in.

A "cleft" is an open space, often made by splitting two rocks apart.

Keifeger...tied an old tin can to the tail of the kite.

"Tin" is a cheap metal and a "kite" is a light frame covered with paper or cloth, attached to a long string, that is designed to blow in the air.

Dying old women remember their dead men

crumble and fade. Regrets, recriminations.

"To crumble" is to fall apart into lots of tiny pieces. "To fade" is to lose energy or color as one ages. "Recriminations" are accusations of immoral or bad acts against a person who has already made accusations against another person.

Other things, such as blood stained pillow slips.

If something is "stained" with blood, it has spots of blood on it. A "pillow slip" is the cloth covering that goes on a pillow.

On the way back, they would stagger on to my lawn and call, "Blanche!"

"To stagger" is to walk in an unsteady or violent manner, as people who are drunk always do.

There's a cop now.

A very common colloquial word for a policeman.

A moonlight swim at the old rock quarry?

An open area for mining or digging rock from the earth.

If anyone is sober enough to drive, it's the best way to stop your head buzzing.

If a person is "sober," they are calm, serious or completely in charge of their emotions and body (the opposite of drunk). If a person's head is "buzzing," it is dizzy, overwhelmed or filled with the sounds a bee makes.

You have to be careful to dive where the deep pool is!

"To dive" is to jump hands first into the water.

May I rest my weary head on your shoulders? It's so comforting.

If a person is weary, they are impatient or tired to the point of being exhausted. If something is "comforting," it helps you to feel relaxed, comfortable or reassured.

The baby won't come 'til tomorrow, so they told me to come home and get a little shut eye.

A slangy way of saying sleep.

You received a wire? :: I received a telegram from an old admirer of mine.
 Before phones and the internet, “wires” and “telegrams” were common means to receive fast written communications from far away. An “admirer” is a person who admires, respects or even loves someone else.

An invitation...a cruise of the Caribbean on a yacht! :: Well , what do you know!
 A “cruise” is a small voyage on a ship, and a “yacht” is a personal ship for a rich person. “What do you know” can be a slangy way of expressing both surprise and satisfaction at the arrival of good news.

It came like a bolt from the blue.
 If something is “a bolt from the blue,” it comes as a complete surprise (A bolt is a sudden and forceful strike, such as lightning or a missile).

I tore into my trunk to see the hat I had to wear.
 “To tear into” something is to rip it open with great force.

This old relic?
 A “relic” is an old object or souvenir which is from a time long ago.

I thought it was Tiffany’s diamonds. :: Anyhow, I shall be entertained in style.
 Tiffany’s is a store that is famous for its expensive jewelry. If a person does something “in style,” they do it with elegance and grace.

Into the picture pops this Miami millionaire.
 In this case, “to pop” means to suddenly and unexpectedly arrive.

He broke his front teeth right off, and after that he was so ashamed of himself he used to sneak out of the house when company came.
 “To sneak out of” a house is to leave secretly so nobody would notice.

What do you say, Blanche? Want to bury the hatchet and make it a loving cup?
 “To bury the hatchet” is to agree to stop fighting or arguing and make up (A hatchet was a weapon used by Native American Indians).The second half of the sentence---’to make it a loving cup’---is never used.

Why don’t you get with it?
 “To get with it” is a colloquial way of saying to accept or even like whatever it is that’s being discussed.

This is something I always break out for special occasions.
 The silk pajamas I wore on my wedding night.
 “To break out” something is to take it out of its box in order to use it.
 An “occasion” is a special event or an occurrence. “Silk” is an expensive type of cloth, and “pajamas” are clothes that are worn when sleeping.

I’m going to rip them off and wave them like a flag.
 “To rip off” clothes is to tear them off forcefully, and to “wave” a piece of cloth is to move it back and forth in the air.

We're entitled to put on the dog; You have a millionaire and I have a baby.
 If a person is "entitled to" do something, they have the right to do it or deserve to do it ("To put on the dog" is to celebrate, though this is no longer ever used).

Think of how divine it will be to have privacy again. I can weep with joy.
 If something is "divine," it is wonderful, or more literally, inspired by or related to God. "To weep with joy" is to cry out of great happiness.

He respects me. What he wants is my companionship.
 Another word for friendship or perhaps company.

Having great wealth sometimes makes people lonely.
 An important word for material riches, such as land and other property, or paper riches, such as stocks, bonds and money in the bank.

A cultivated woman of good breeding and intelligence can enrich a man's life immeasurably. I have those things to offer.
 If a person is "cultivated," they are educated in the fine arts such as music and literature. If they are "of good breeding," they come from an educated or upper class background (though this is a silly and dated expression). "To enrich" a person's life is to make it better, and if something is "immeasurable," it cannot be measured or quantified.

Physical beauty is passing... a transitory possession. But beauty of the mind, tenderness of the spirit, tenderness of the heart---I have all of those things.
 If something is "transitory," it will only last a relatively short time before passing away. "Tenderness" is sweetness or gentleness, and a person's "spirit" is their attitude, energy or general personality or soul.

How strange that I should be called a destitute woman, but I have all these treasures locked in my heart.
 If a person is "destitute," they are very poor with little or no money and few or no physical possessions. "Treasures" are anything of great value.

I have been foolish casting my pearls... :: Swine, huh?!
 If a person is "foolish," they do or say things that are very stupid. "To cast" is to throw, "pearls" are valuable stones used as jewelry, and "swine" is a negative word for a pig. There is a famous expression from the Bible which says "Do not cast pearls before swine," which means you should not give things of value to those who will not appreciate or understand them (Stanley knows Blanche thinks of him as a pig).

He came tonight, to repeat vicious stories he got from you! :: I gave him his walking papers!
 "Vicious" is a very strong adjective meaning hate-filled, violent or dangerously aggressive. "To give someone their walking papers" is to tell them to leave or get lost (A dated but fun expression).

He implored my forgiveness....Deliberate cruelty is not forgivable.

"To implore" is to beg. If an action is "deliberate," it is done intentionally or on purpose (not by accident). "Cruelty" is the act of causing great pain or suffering.

I said...our ways of life are different, our backgrounds are incompatible.

In this case, a person's "background" is their social class and family upbringing. If two people are "incompatible," they can not get along because they are too different.

So farewell my friend, and let there be no hard feelings.

"Farewell" is a very formal way of saying goodbye. "Hard feelings" are feelings of bitterness or anger toward another person.

There isn't a thing but imagination and lies and deceits and tricks.

A "deceit" is another word for a lie, and in this case, a "trick" is an action that is designed to fool or cheat someone.

Look at yourself...in a worn out Mardi Gras outfit.

If clothes are "worn out," they are old and falling apart. "Mardi Gras" is a well known yearly festival or carnival (In French, it literally means "Fat Tuesday"). An "outfit" is a set of clothes that are worn together.

I rented it for 50 cents from some rag picker.

Note that "some" operates an indefinite article, meaning "a." A "rag picker" is a poor person who looks for rags or worn clothes in large trash cans.

I've been on to you from the start, and not once did you pull the wool over this boy's eyes.

To be "on to" a person is to know or realize what they are doing (something that is often secretive or immoral). "To pull the wool over a person's eyes" is to fool or cheat them.

You come in here and you sprinkle the place with powder and perfume, and lo and behold, the place has turned into Egypt....

"To sprinkle" powder is to scatter or distribute it in small drops or particles. "Lo and behold" is an interesting expression that means "And now, look at that!" (To behold is a very formal way of saying to observe).

...and you are the queen of the Nile, sitting on the throne, drinking my liquor!

"The Nile" is the famous river in Africa, and a "throne" is the official chair in which a king or queen sits.

Western Union? Take down this message! "Desperate, desperate circumstances!"

Western Union was the most well known telegraph company, and still wires money between countries. "Circumstances" are the facts or details of a situation.

You think I'm going to interfere with you...or maybe you wouldn't be bad to interfere with?

"To interfere" with a person is to prevent them from doing what they want to, though here Stanley says it in such a threatening or aggressive way that it almost implies an act of sexual violence.

Something awful will happen!

A widely used word for truly horrible or extremely bad.

What did you do that for?! :: So I could twist the broken end in your face!

"To twist" something is to turn it in circles.

You want to rough house, huh?

To act in a "rough" manner is to act with aggression or even violence (but the expression 'to rough house' is no longer used).

I'm cussing your rotten luck!

"To cuss" is to use dirty words (shit, fuck, etc), and in this case, "rotten" means extremely bad or awful.

I figure four out of five isn't going to get through, but I would and I did.

"To figure" is to think or in this case, believe (note that it should be four of five *aren't...*) Here, "to get through" means to pass or be successful.

To hold that proposition in this rat race, you got to believe your lucky.

In this context, "to hold a proposition" is to believe in a certain idea. "The rat race" is the constant struggle to make money and get ahead in business and economic life in general.

You brag, brag bulls.

"To brag" is to speak in a boastful or conceited manner about yourself or things you have accomplished ("To brag bulls" is never used).

Stella says goodbye to her troubled sister.

Men are callous things with no feelings, but this does beat anything.

If a person is "callous," they show no sympathy or kindness toward other people. In this case, "to beat" means to be more ridiculous or outrageous than anything else.

If it's not too crushed, I'll wear it. And on the lapel, that silver and turquoise pin, shaped like a seahorse.

If something has been physically crushed, it has been smashed flat. A "lapel" is the folded back part of a collar on a coat. "Turquoise" is a color that is a combination of light green and blue. A "seahorse" is a small bony fish that almost looks like it has a horse head.

It's in the heart-shaped box I keep my accessories in.
 "Accessories" are small things that are often used as beauty products, such as combs, brushes and lip stick.

Stella, is the coast clear?
 A fun and still used question that you would ask if you want to know if anybody is watching, such as when you want to come out of the bathroom, but you're only half-clothed.

She's going on vacation. :: I'm green with envy.
 "To be green with envy" is to be very jealous of what somebody has (To be *envious* is also to desire what another has).

Such a pretty lavender jacket. :: It's lilac colored.
 Two words to describe different shades of the color purple.

The cathedral chimes; They're the only clean things in the quarter.
 A "cathedral" is a big stone church, and "chimes" are a large set of church bells (To chime is to ring). The *French Quarter* is the New Orleans neighborhood where this film takes place.

How is she dressed? :: Just a plain, tailored outfit.
 If clothes are "plain," they are simple and not particularly interesting, and a "tailored outfit" is a set of clothes made or sewn by hand, by a tailor.

How do I look? :: **Lovely**.
 A favorite British adjective for pretty or beautiful.

Blanche, you left nothing here but spilt talcum and old perfume bottles.
 Note that the past participle of to spill is *spilt*! "Talcum" is a type of white powder that is often used to cool down or refresh sweaty skin.

He did this to her! He must be nuts!
 A common slang word for crazy or insane.

These finger nails have to be trimmed.
 If nails are trimmed, they are neatly cut.

Jacket, doctor? :: Not unless necessary.
 Note that a "*straight jacket*" is a jacket made of very stiff material that is designed to keep the arms of a prisoner or violent patient in place, straight and close to their bodies.

Whoever you are, I've always depended on the kindness of strangers.
 "Kindness" is state of being nice, gentle and helpful. This line is one of the most famous in the history of the movies!

A Streetcar Named Desire

Possible Topics for ESL Class Discussion

1. Why do you think this movie was so controversial when it came out in 1951?
2. What would you find more disagreeable---Blanche's upper class snobbiness, or Stanley's working class vulgarity?
3. What's the best way to handle a crazy relative who wants to move into your house?
4. What's wrong with Blanche?
5. What did you like and not like about this film?