

Class: English 2130

Assignment: Class Discussion Questions/SCND

Directions: Read each of the questions below and answer thoughtfully and exhaustively. Consider each question in context of the historical setting, the literary setting, and the intertextual setting. In other words, how does the historical context influence Williams' work? How does the literary setting and the literature of the past work in conversation with this text?

Question 1: In SCND, there is a powerful contrast between the Old South and the New South. How do you see this in the text? In other words, think about: the Old World refinement mixed with poverty and modern day life, decay and corruption versus regenerative powers of desire and procreation, and the mix of the modern world and New Orleans confused history. How can you describe and illustrate this theme of Old South versus New South? What characters represent which era? How does the New Orleans setting contribute to this theme?

Question 2: Several times throughout the play, we see Blanche covering the light bulb in Stanley and Stella's apartment with a paper lantern. We can assume that this covering symbolizes the fact that when the light is covered it represents Blanche's escape from having to face reality. She can, in fact, fabricate and re-imagine whatever she wants. Why does Williams use the paper lantern as a sign in this play? What does it signify beyond Blanche's desire to escape reality? Is this sign ever challenged? If so, by whom? How does it relate to the themes of illusion and loneliness in the play?

Question 3: In scene 11, Blanche espouses one of the most famous lines in the play—"Whoever you are, I have always depended on the kindness of strangers." To whom is she speaking? What does she mean by this statement? How does it relate to what Williams is trying to portray in his work? How is this statement ironic?

Question 4: Along with themes of Old South versus New South, Loneliness, and Illusion, Williams also portrays the theme of the Primitive and the Primal. How does he do this? Through which character? What is his point in including this theme? How, specifically, do we see this theme played out? What effect does it have on our reaction to the work?

Question 5: Think about SCND as it relates to the texts that come before it in the context of what it means to be American and the definition of the "American dream." How does Williams portray the concept of "American-ness" in this text? How does it compare with earlier texts? In other words, how does it place itself in conversation with history and literature of the time period and time periods before it?