

Looking back- Spoken language features in the transcripts of the Paris Anthology. Characters and themes in context in *The Handmaid's Tale*.

A Streetcar Named

"What is straight? A line can be straight, or a street, but the human heart, oh, no, it's curved like a road through mountains."



Exam format: Open book- minutes.

One question from a choice of two on drama set text

This part of the subject content focuses on how language choices help to construct ideas of conflict between people, and between people and their societies. Students learn about the ways in which writers and speakers use language, beginning with a general focus on broad questions such as:

- How do people interact?
- How do people claim power and position others in talk?
- How do people express identity?
- What communicative strategies do people use when in conflict with others?
- How do different groups or individuals make themselves heard?

Drawing both on their everyday experiences of interaction in different modes and on published texts, students learn about how the language choices writers make are used to express relationships, drive narrative, and construct views about the nature of different societies. They apply their knowledge to the study of texts about individuals in situations of conflict.



Modesty Maxim

Key vocabulary

Pragmatics
Aspirated consonants
Extended metaphor
Pathetic Fallacy
Sibilance
The American Dream
Argumentative indicators
Frame narrative
Embedded narrative
Personification
Free indirect discourse
Modal auxiliary verbs
Veracity
Homogeneity

Key concepts:

Language analysis

- phonetics, phonology and prosodics – for example, how aspects of spoken language are produced and interpreted
- lexis and semantics – for example, the different connotations of terms of address
- grammar – for example, how structural features express characters' attitudes
- pragmatics – for example, the assumptions made about listeners/readers by the speaker's/writer's language choices
- discourse – for example, the conventions of drama texts.

Drama and dramatic discourse, including how playwrights:

- represent natural speech features
- use language to create distinctively different characters
- show characters asserting power and positioning others via their language and behaviour
- use the idea of conflict to create dynamic narratives and address the wider themes of the play.

Scene 1

In early May, Blanche Dubois arrives unannounced at her younger sister Stella's apartment in Elysian Fields, New Orleans. On arrival, she discovers that her sister, Stella, who is married to Stanley Kowalski- the son of a Polish immigrant, lives in a run-down and very small apartment. She is let in by Eunice (the owner of the apartment) and waits for her sister to return. She helps herself to a glass of whiskey. When Stella arrives, Blanche is pleased to see her but cannot conceal her shock at Stella's living conditions. Stella is happy and content in her life and relationship with Stanley. Blanche confesses to losing their family home, Belle Reve, in Mississippi due to debts and the deaths of the older generations. Stanley arrives home with two friends: Mitch (who lives at home with his invalid mother) and Steve (who lives upstairs with his wife Eunice). Stanley accepts Blanche's presence but is not particularly pleased about it. Blanche finds his unrefined character unnerving. At the very end of the scene, Blanche reveals that she married very young but that her husband died.

Scene 2

The next night, Stella tells Stanley about the loss of Belle Reve, while Blanche is in the bath. Stanley suspects Blanche is keeping money from the sale from them- he considers himself to have a right to this money (stating the Napoleonic Code). He starts to rifle through her belongings looking for evidence. Blanche appears and Stanley demands to see a bill of sale for the house. He snatches a pile of papers, which turn out to be poems from her dead husband- which Blanche does not respond well to. She hands him the legal papers. He maintains his actions were justified. Stella and Blanche go out for the evening while the men stay to play poker.

Scene 3

Stanley's poker night has not finished when Stella and Blanche arrive home at 2.30am. Blanche is taken by Mitch's gentle and polite nature. Stanley is drunk and becomes belligerent, throwing a radio out of the window before hitting Stella. Blanche takes Stella upstairs to Eunice's apartment. After a cold shower, Stanley calls for Stella to come home. Stella slowly makes her way downstairs, before Stanley carries her into their flat. Blanche is horrified by their reconciliation and is comforted by Mitch.

Scene 4

The next morning, Stella tries to explain why she is with Stanley. She discusses her acceptance of the violence because of the passion they share. Blanche hopes to persuade her sister to leave Stanley, planning a future financed by an old admirer who she says is a millionaire. Stanley overhears. When he enters the room, Stella embraces him, proving how dedicated she is to him.

Scene 5

Stanley frightens Blanche, asking about a man called Shaw and a hotel called 'The Flamingo' in Laurel (where Blanche worked as an English teacher). Blanche checks that Stella does not know anything unpleasant about her. She awaits Mitch's arrival to take her on a date. Whilst she waits, she flirts and kisses a young man who collects subscriptions for the newspaper.

Scene 6

Blanche and Mitch return home late. Mitch tries to kiss Blanche. She complains to Mitch of Stanley's hostility. Blanche opens up to Mitch about her short marriage, which ended when she found him (Allan) in bed with another man. After voicing her disgust, her husband shot himself. Mitch puts his arm around Blanche and kisses her.

Scene 7

It's the 15th September and Blanche's birthday. She is in the bath. Stanley enters with evidence of Blanche's past promiscuity, slipping out to meet soldiers at night and living like a prostitute in a hotel. She lost her teaching job after trying to seduce a seventeen-year-old boy and was driven out of Laurel. Stella tries to defend her sister, referring to her unhappy marriage and early life. Stanley reveals that he has already shared with Mitch all he knows. Blanche emerges from the bathroom happy, but this quickly turns to terror when she senses the mood in the room.

Scene 8

Mitch does not attend Blanche's birthday meal and the atmosphere is tense. Stanley loses his temper when Stella criticises his manners. He presents Blanche with a bus ticket back to Laurel as a birthday present. Blanche rushes to be sick. Stella attempts to reprimand Stanley, but goes into labour and asks Stanley to take her to the hospital, leaving Blanche alone

Scene 9

Mitch arrives and has been drinking. He is angry and upset at Blanche for deceiving him. Blanche does not deny it but tries to explain away her behaviour as due to grief and guilt for the death of her husband. She asks Mitch for protection but he attempts to rape her. He leaves when Blanche begins shouting 'fire!'

Scene 10

Stanley returns from the hospital. Blanche claims to have has an invitation to a Caribbean cruise from a millionaire. Blanche lies about Mitch's attitude to her. Blanche uses a broken bottle to attempt to ward off Stanley's sexual advances. She fails, and Stanley carries her off to the bed to rape her.

Scene 11

It is some weeks later, Stanley is playing poker with his friends. Blanche is in the bathroom and Stella is packing her trunk. They are awaiting the arrival of a doctor and nurse from a state-run hospital for the mentally ill to take Blanche away. She is unaware of this. Stella has reluctantly agreed to this. She has chosen not to believe Blanche's claims of rape, siding with her husband for the sake of herself and her baby. Blanche imagines she is going on a holiday with an admirer, but is frightened by the nurse. She eventually leaves willingly, as Stella looks on holding her baby. Stanley attempts to comfort her, and they begin to have sex.