APPENDICES

BIOGRAPHY, WORKS AND SUMMARY

APPENDIX 1: Biography of Tennessee Williams

Tennessee Williams was born in Columbus, Mississippi, in 1911. The name given to him at birth was Thomas Lanier Williams III. He did not acquire the nickname Tennessee until college, when classmates began calling him that in honor of his Southern accent and his father’s home state. The Williams family had produced several illustrious politicians in the state of Tennessee, but Williams’s grandfather had squandered the family fortune. Williams’s father, C.C. Williams, was a traveling salesman and a heavy drinker. Williams’s mother, Edwina, was a Mississippi clergyman’s daughter and prone to hysterical attacks. Until Williams was seven, he, his parents, his older sister, Rose, and his younger brother, Dakin, lived with Edwina’s parents in Mississippi. After that, the family moved to St. Louis. Once there, the family’s situation deteriorated. C.C.’s drinking increased, the family moved sixteen times in ten years, and the young Williams, always shy and fragile, was ostracized and taunted at school. During these years, he and Rose became extremely close. Rose, the model for Laura in The Glass Menagerie, suffered from mental illness later in life and eventually underwent a prefrontal lobotomy (an intensive brain surgery), an event that was extremely upsetting for Williams.
An average student and social outcast in high school, Williams turned to the movies and writing for solace. At sixteen, Williams won five dollars in a national competition for his answer to the question “Can a good wife be a good sport?”; his answer was published in Smart Set magazine. The next year, he published a horror story in a magazine called Weird Tales, and the year after that he entered the University of Missouri as a journalism major. While there, he wrote his first plays. Before Williams could receive his degree, however, his father, outraged because Williams had failed a required ROTC program course, forced him to withdraw from school and go to work at the same shoe company where he himself worked.

Williams worked at the shoe factory for three years, a job that culminated in a minor nervous breakdown. After that, he returned to college, this time at Washington University in St. Louis. While he was studying there, a St. Louis theater group produced his plays The Fugitive Kind and Candles to the Sun. Personal problems led Williams to drop out of Washington University and enroll in the University of Iowa. While he was in Iowa, his sister, Rose, underwent a lobotomy, which left her institutionalized for the rest of her life. Despite this trauma, Williams finally graduated in 1938. In the years that followed, he lived a bohemian life, working menial jobs and wandering from city to city. He continued to work on drama, however, receiving a Rockefeller grant and studying playwriting at the New School in New York. During the early years of World War II, Williams worked in Hollywood as a scriptwriter.

Around 1941, Williams began the work that would become The Glass Menagerie. The play evolved from a short story entitled “Portrait of a Girl in
Glass,” which focused more completely on Laura than the play does. In December of 1944, The Glass Menagerie was staged in Chicago, with the collaboration of a number of well-known theatrical figures. When the play first opened, the audience was sparse, but the Chicago critics raved about it, and eventually it was playing to full houses. In March of 1945, the play moved to Broadway, where it won the prestigious New York Drama Critics’ Circle Award. This highly personal, explicitly autobiographical play earned Williams fame, fortune, and critical respect, and it marked the beginning of a successful run that would last for another ten years. Two years after The Glass Menagerie, Williams won another Drama Critics’ Circle Award and a Pulitzer Prize for A Streetcar Named Desire. Williams won the same two prizes again in 1955, for Cat on a Hot Tin Roof.

The impact of success on Williams’s life was colossal and, in his estimation, far from positive. In an essay entitled “The Catastrophe of Success,” he outlines, with both light humor and a heavy sense of loss, the dangers that fame poses for an artist. For years after he became a household name, Williams continued to mine his own experiences to create pathos-laden works. Alcoholism, depression, thwarted desire, loneliness in search of purpose, and insanity were all part of Williams’s world. Since the early 1940s, he had been a known homosexual, and his experiences in an era and culture unfriendly to homosexuality certainly affected his work. After 1955, Williams began using drugs, and he would later refer to the 1960s as his “stoned age.” He suffered a period of intense depression after the death of his longtime partner in 1961 and, six years later, entered a psychiatric hospital in St. Louis. He continued to write nonetheless, though most critics agree that the quality of his work diminished in his later life. His life’s
work adds up to twenty-five full-length plays, five screenplays, over seventy one-act plays, hundreds of short stories, two novels, poetry, and a memoir; five of his plays were also made into movies. Williams died from choking in a drug-related incident in 1983.

**APPENDIX 2 : The Works of Tennessee Williams**

The "mad heroine" theme that appeared in many of his plays seemed clearly influenced by the life of Williams' sister Rose.

Characters in his plays are often seen as representations of his family members. Laura Wingfield in *The Glass Menagerie* was understood to be modeled on Rose. Some biographers believed that the character of Blanche DuBois in *A Streetcar Named Desire* is also based on her, as well as Williams himself. When Williams wrote *A Streetcar Named Desire*, he believed he was going to die and that this play would be his swan song.

Amanda Wingfield in *The Glass Menagerie* was generally seen to represent Williams' mother. Characters such as Tom Wingfield in *The Glass Menagerie* and Sebastian in *Suddenly, Last Summer* were understood to represent Williams himself. In addition, he used a lobotomy operation as a motif in *Suddenly, Last Summer*.

*Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* included references to elements of Williams' life such as homosexuality, mental instability and alcoholism.
Williams wrote *The Parade, or Approaching the End of a Summer* when he was 29 and worked on it through his life. It seemed an autobiographical depiction of an early romance in Provincetown, Massachusetts. This play was produced for the first time on 1 October 2006 in Provincetown by the Shakespeare on the Cape production company, as part of the First Annual Provincetown Tennessee Williams Festival.

*The Parade, or Approaching the End of a Summer* will be published by New Directions in the spring of 2008, in a collection of previously unpublished plays titled *The Traveling Companion and Other Plays*, edited by Williams scholar Annette J. Saddik.

**The complete works**

**Major plays**

- *The Glass Menagerie* (1944)
- *A Streetcar Named Desire* (1947)
- *Summer and Smoke* (1948, reworked in 1964 as *The Eccentricities of a Nightingale*)
- *The Rose Tattoo* (1951)
- *Camino Real* (1953)
- *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* (1955)
- *Suddenly, Last Summer* (1958)
• *Sweet Bird of Youth* (1959)

• *Period of Adjustment* (1960)

• *The Night of the Iguana* (1961)

**Later plays**

• *The Milk Train Doesn't Stop Here Anymore* (1963)

• *The Slapstick Tragedy: The Gnädiges Fraulein and The Mutilated* (1966)

• *The Seven Descents of Myrtle* (1968)

• *In the Bar of a Tokyo Hotel* (1969)

• *Will Mr. Merriweather Return from Memphis?* (1969)

• *Small Craft Warnings* (1972)

• *The Two-Character Play* (1973, also called *Out Cry*)

• *The Red Devil Battery Sign* (1975)

• *This Is (An Entertainment)* (1976)

• *Vieux Carré* (1977)

• *Tiger Tail* (1978)

• *A Lovely Sunday for Creve Coeur* (1979)

• *Clothes for a Summer Hotel* (1980)
• The Notebook of Trigorin (1980 adaptation of Chekhov's The Seagull)

• Something Cloudy, Something Clear (1981)

• A House Not Meant to Stand (1982)

**Apprentice plays**

• Candles to the Sun (1936)

• Fugitive Kind (1937)

• Spring Storm (1937)

• Not about Nightingales (1938)

• Battle of Angels (1940, rewritten in 1957 as Orpheus Descending)

• You Touched Me (1945)

• Stairs to the Roof (1947)

**Short stories**

• The Vengeance of Nitocris (1928)

• The Field of Blue Children (1939)

• Hard Candy: a Book of Stories (1954)

• Three Players of a Summer Game and Other Stories (1960)
• *The Knightly Quest: a Novella and Four Short Stories* (1966)

• *One Arm and Other Stories* (1967)


• *Tent Worms* (1980)

• *It Happened the day the Sun Rose, and Other Stories* (1981)

**Other works**

• The Roman Spring of Mrs. Stone, a novella (1950)

• One act plays by Tennessee Williams

• *Baby Doll* (1956, screenplay; adapted for the stage in 1978 as *Tiger Tail*)

• *In the Winter of Cities* (1956, poetry)

• *Memoirs* (1975, autobiography)

• *Androgyne, Mon Amour* (1977, poetry)

• *The Catastrophe of Success*
APPENDIX 3: Summary of *The Glass Menagerie*

The Glass Menagerie is a memory play, and its action is drawn from the memories of the narrator, Tom Wingfield. Tom is a character in the play, which is set in St. Louis in 1937. He is an aspiring poet who toils in a shoe warehouse to support his mother, Amanda, and sister, Laura. Mr. Wingfield, Tom and Laura’s father, ran off years ago and, except for one postcard, has not been heard from since.

Amanda, originally from a genteel Southern family, regales her children frequently with tales of her idyllic youth and the scores of suitors who once pursued her. She is disappointed that Laura, who wears a brace on her leg and is painfully shy, does not attract any gentleman callers. She enrolls Laura in a business college, hoping that she will make her own and the family’s fortune through a business career. Weeks later, however, Amanda discovers that Laura’s crippling shyness has led her to drop out of the class secretly and spend her days wandering the city alone. Amanda then decides that Laura’s last hope must lie in marriage and begins selling newspaper subscriptions to earn the extra money she believes will help to attract suitors for Laura. Meanwhile, Tom, who loathes his warehouse job, finds escape in liquor, movies, and literature, much to his mother’s chagrin. During one of the frequent arguments between mother and son, Tom accidentally breaks several of the glass animal figurines that are Laura’s most prized possessions.
Amanda and Tom discuss Laura’s prospects, and Amanda asks Tom to keep an eye out for potential suitors at the warehouse. Tom selects Jim O’Connor, a casual friend, and invites him to dinner. Amanda quizzes Tom about Jim and is delighted to learn that he is a driven young man with his mind set on career advancement. She prepares an elaborate dinner and insists that Laura wear a new dress. At the last minute, Laura learns the name of her caller; as it turns out, she had a devastating crush on Jim in high school. When Jim arrives, Laura answers the door, on Amanda’s orders, and then quickly disappears, leaving Tom and Jim alone. Tom confides to Jim that he has used the money for his family’s electric bill to join the merchant marine and plans to leave his job and family in search of adventure. Laura refuses to eat dinner with the others, feigning illness. Amanda, wearing an ostentatious dress from her glamorous youth, talks vivaciously with Jim throughout the meal.

As dinner is ending, the lights go out as a consequence of the unpaid electric bill. The characters light candles, and Amanda encourages Jim to entertain Laura in the living room while she and Tom clean up. Laura is at first paralyzed by Jim’s presence, but his warm and open behavior soon draws her out of her shell. She confesses that she knew and liked him in high school but was too shy to approach him. They continue talking, and Laura reminds him of the nickname he had given her: “Blue Roses,” an accidental corruption of the word for Laura’s medical condition, pleurosis. He reproaches her for her shyness and low self-esteem but praises her uniqueness. Laura then ventures to show him her favorite glass animal, a unicorn. Jim dances with her, but in the process, he accidentally knocks over the unicorn, breaking off its horn. Laura is forgiving, noting that now the unicorn is a
normal horse. Jim then kisses her, but he quickly draws back and apologizes, explaining that he was carried away by the moment and that he actually has a serious girlfriend. Resigned, Laura offers him the broken unicorn as a souvenir.

Amanda enters the living room, full of good cheer. Jim hastily explains that he must leave because of an appointment with his fiancée. Amanda sees him off warmly but, after he is gone, turns on Tom, who had not known that Jim was engaged. Amanda accuses Tom of being an inattentive, selfish dreamer and then throws herself into comforting Laura. From the fire escape outside of their apartment, Tom watches the two women and explains that, not long after Jim’s visit, he gets fired from his job and leaves Amanda and Laura behind. Years later, though he travels far, he finds that he is unable to leave behind guilty memories of Laura.