

The Glass Menagerie Themes

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Themes

Abandonment: The theme of abandonment is central to *"The Glass Menagerie."* The father has left the family, and his absence deeply affects Amanda. She fears being helpless and pushes Laura to gain business skills and find a husband. Jim's departure from Laura creates a heartbreaking climax. Tom struggles between his duty to his family and his desire for freedom. Although Tom eventually leaves, he never fully abandons them emotionally. The play itself is Tom's memory of Laura and Amanda. Tom's memory of Amanda and Laura shows that he is still connected to them.

Memory: In his monologue that opens the play, Tom announces, *"The play is memory."* The play is Tom's memory of the past, and all of the action takes place in his head. In *"The Glass Menagerie,"* the past haunts all the characters. Tom cannot escape his memory. Although Tom eventually leaves the family, he never fully abandons them emotionally. Tom's memory of Amanda and Laura shows that he is still connected to them. Amanda hides behind her memories of being a popular Southern belle. She holds on to her youthful memory to avoid facing reality. She dresses up in her old gown and speaks with a Southern accent when Jim, the Gentleman Caller, arrives. Laura, too, retreats into her memories, finding safety in the past, much like her fragile glass animals. Her memories, like being called "Blue Roses," are delicate and precious to her.

Escape: In *"The Glass Menagerie,"* escape works in two ways: retreating into memories and dreams, as Amanda and Laura do, or seeking to leave the past behind, as Tom desires. Amanda escapes reality by clinging to an idealized past. She refuses harsh reality. She projects her dreams onto Laura, rather than accepting her children's struggles. Laura, meanwhile, escapes into her glass animals and memories. She finds comfort in worlds she can control. Tom, on the other hand, seeks physical escape. He feels trapped by his responsibilities and love for his family, unable to fully break free. He dreams of leaving his restrictive life, frequently escaping to the fire escape, the movies, and through alcohol.