New Stage Theatre presents

Tennessee Williams’

Baby Doll

Screenplay by Tennessee Williams
Adapted for the stage by Pierre Laville and Emily Mann
Directed by Rus Blackwell

October 24-November 5, 2017

For tickets: 601-948-3531 or newstagetheatre.com

Sponsored by

The Clarion-Ledger

NEW STAGE Theatre
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

To the Educator .................................................................................................................. 3

A Note to Students: What to Expect at the Theater ......................................................... 4

New Stage Theatre .............................................................................................................. 5

About the Author ............................................................................................................ 6

From the Page to the Stage .............................................................................................. 7

Meet the Players ............................................................................................................. 8

Plot Summary ................................................................................................................. 9

Article: Tennessee’s Mississippi Muse (Discussion Questions and Writing Prompts) ........ 10-11

Article: Williams’ Women ............................................................................................... 12

The Art of Costume Design: A Journey Back in Time .................................................. 13-14

Post-Show Activities ..................................................................................................... 15-19

If You Have One Day To Prepare .................................................................................. 20

Teacher/Student Evaluations ......................................................................................... 21-22

Explore and Learn More! ............................................................................................... 23
We are thrilled to have you and your students at New Stage to experience Tennessee Williams BABY DOLL! Thank you for taking the time to arrange for your school to attend a student matinee! BABY DOLL has only been produced by three other theatres in the world! We are elated to attain the rights to bring this rare production to the stage!

This study guide is to help prepare you and your students for the performance. We have included writing prompts, discussion questions and classroom activities to invite your students into the world of Mississippi born playwright Tennessee Williams and BABY DOLL. We want to prepare them to experience live theatre set in a different time period, to understand their role as audience members, and to gain a deeper knowledge of the story’s themes and characters.

We have included an array of activities for before and after the play from facts about the author to a word search to help them fully engage in the story. We hope these activities will get your students excited to see the show!

At the end of the study guide, we have included evaluations for both teachers and students. We would love to hear your feedback! Please feel free to send not only the evaluations but any activities and pictures your students create in response to the show!

The cast, crew, and staff at New Stage cannot wait to welcome you to the theatre! From all of us at New Stage: enjoy the show!

Sincerely,

Sharon Miles,

Education Director
NOTE TO STUDENTS: EXPECTATIONS

YOU HAVE AN IMPORTANT ROLE TO PLAY!!

You may or may not have attended a live theater performance before. To increase your enjoyment, it might be helpful to look at the unique qualities of this art form — because it is so different from movies or video!

The live theatrical performance not only involves the actors on the stage; it is meant to involve you, the audience, in ways that film and television cannot. In truth, although you are sitting in an auditorium and the actors are on stage, there is very little separating the audience from the performers. How you react to the play deeply affects the actors. Something as seemingly trivial as whispering or unwrapping a candy bar can distract them and disrupt the mood and tone of their performance. Due to the important relationship between actors and audience members, there are certain provisions of live theater we wish to call to your attention. These basics work to ensure an enjoyable experience for everyone!

Basic Theatre Etiquette

- **Do NOT** take photos or videos during the performance. Just enjoy the show!
- **Do NOT** eat, drink or chew gum in the theatre. Save snacks for intermission!
- **Do wait quietly** in your seat for the show to begin and **stay in your seat** during the performance. Again... just wait for intermission!
- **Do make sure all cell phones are turned OFF during the performance.**
  - The light from a silent cell phone while texting or checking social media can be very distracting to other people in the audience and the actors on stage. Even if you try to mask it with your hand or under clothing we can still see the light. It might also interfere with microphones.
- **Do NOT** talk to your neighbor during the show! Listen carefully or you both will miss something!
- **Do feel free to react appropriately** to the performance. We welcome your laughter and applause! Remember audience reaction is important!
NEW STAGE THEATRE

Mississippi’s Professional Regional Theatre!

MISSION
The mission of New Stage Theatre is to provide professional theatre of the highest quality for the people of Mississippi and the Southeast.

New Stage is committed to producing important contemporary works and classics, selected for their artistic merit and their power to illuminate the human condition. Challenging new works in development are included through the Eudora Welty New Play Series, named for the distinguished writer.

The theatre is dedicated to cultivating and educating a culturally diverse audience by gathering the finest available resources including playwrights, actors, directors, designers, technicians, administrators, trainees, and board members. Integral to the theatre’s total effort, its education department maximizes its potential by offering artistic and technical apprenticeships, by mounting touring programs supported by teachers’ materials for schools statewide, and by developing curricula for and teaching youth and adult classes.

HISTORY
New Stage Theatre was chartered as a nonprofit organization in 1965 and produced its initial season in the winter and spring of 1966. Founded by Jane Reid Petty and seven other charter board members, with the assistance of the American National Theatre Academy and Actors’ Equity Association, the theatre has been dedicated to professional excellence in the dramatic arts since its inception.

Now in its 52nd year, New Stage produces a full professional season, including five main stage shows in the subscription series, a Holiday show, children’s shows, the Unframed at New Stage Theatre Series and selections in the Eudora Welty New Plays Series, named in honor of the internationally acclaimed writer, a lifetime member of the theatre’s board of directors.

As a professional regional theatre, New Stage is committed to exploring new worlds of theatre, including challenging new works in development, important contemporary plays and classics selected for their artistic merit, their power to illuminate the human condition and their impact on the community.
Tennessee Williams was brilliant and prolific, breathing life and passion into such memorable characters as Blanche DuBois and Stanley Kowalski in his critically acclaimed A STREETCAR NAMED DESIRE. And like them, he was troubled and self-destructive, an abuser of alcohol and drugs. He was awarded four Drama Critic Circle Awards, two Pulitzer Prizes and the Presidential Medal of Freedom. He was derided by critics and blacklisted by Roman Catholic Cardinal Spellman, who condemned one of his scripts as “revolting, deplorable, morally repellent, offensive to Christian standards of decency.” He was Tennessee Williams, one of the greatest playwrights in American history.

Born Thomas Lanier Williams in Columbus, Mississippi in 1911, Tennessee was the son of a shoe company executive and a Southern belle. Williams described his childhood in Mississippi as happy and carefree. This sense of belonging and comfort were lost, however, when his family moved to the urban environment of St. Louis, Missouri. It was there he began to look inward, and to write—“because I found life unsatisfactory.” Williams’ early adult years were occupied with attending college at three different universities, a brief stint working at his father’s shoe company, and a move to New Orleans, which began a lifelong love of the city and set the locale for A STREETCAR NAMED DESIRE.

Williams spent a number of years traveling throughout the country and trying to write. His first critical acclaim came in 1944 when THE GLASS MENAGERIE opened in Chicago and went to Broadway. It won the New York Drama Critics’ Circle Award and, as a film, the New York Film Critics’ Circle Award. At the height of his career in the late 1940s and 1950s, Williams worked with the premier artists of the time, most notably Elia Kazan, the director for stage and screen productions of A STREETCAR NAMED DESIRE, and the stage productions of CAMINO REAL, CAT ON A HOT TIN ROOF, and SWEET BIRD OF YOUTH. Kazan also directed Williams’ film BABY DOLL. Like many of his works, BABY DOLL was simultaneously praised and denounced for addressing raw subject matter in a straightforward realistic way.

The 1960s were perhaps the most difficult years for Williams, as he experienced some of his harshest treatment from the press. In 1961 he wrote THE NIGHT OF THE IGUANA, and in 1963, THE MILK TRAIN DOESN’T STOP HERE ANY MORE. His plays, which had long received criticism for openly addressing taboo topics, were finding more and more detractors. Around this time, Williams’ longtime companion, Frank Merlo, died of cancer. Williams began to depend more and more on alcohol and drugs and though he continued to write, completing a book of short stories and another play, he was in a downward spiral. In 1969 he was hospitalized by his brother.

After his release from the hospital in the 1970s, Williams wrote plays, a memoir, poems, short stories and a novel. In 1975 he published MEMOIRS, which detailed his life and discussed his addiction to drugs and alcohol, as well as his homosexuality. In 1980 Williams wrote CLOTHES FOR A SUMMER HOTEL, based on the lives of Zelda and F. Scott Fitzgerald. Only three years later, Tennessee Williams died in a New York City hotel filled with half-finished bottles of wine and pills. It was in this desperation, which Williams had so closely known and so honestly written about, that we can find a great man and an important body of work. His genius was in his honesty and in the perseverance to tell his stories.
Putting on a play is a lot of fun, but it's also a lot of work! It takes an entire creative team of people to make a play happen. Have you ever considered a job in theatre?

First, a **director** is chosen for the play. The director is the person with the vision for the show.

Next, the director meets with **scenic and costume designers** to discuss the set, props, and costumes.

Then, the director has auditions (or try-outs). **Actors** come to read and perform scenes from the script for a chance to be in the show!

While **actors and directors**, are rehearsing, **designers** and the **crew** are building the costumes, props, and set, and the **box office manager** sells tickets!

Once the actors are chosen to be in the **cast**, rehearsals begin! The **stage manager** organizes the rehearsal calendar and makes sure actors are where they need to be and have what they need.

**Actors** learn their lines and stage blocking while the **designers** and **crew** complete the costumes, props, and set.

A **lighting designer** places lights and other special effects in place to create the best visual display.

Everyone gets together during dress and technical rehearsals to put all the pieces together... and

**FINALLY**
BABY DOLL (Betsy Helmer)
Archie Lee Meighan’s wife, she is a beautiful young woman with the innocence and heart of a child. She has never been formally educated and feels trapped at home with her unappealing, older, controlling husband. She yearns for control over her own life, but does not yet have the means to achieve it.

BABY DOLL QUOTE
“Because in the first place, I didn’t have the money to pay for a hotel room, because you don’t give me any money, because you don’t have any money, and secondly, because if I had the money I couldn’t have no way of getting there because you went off in the Chevy, and leave me no way of getting anywhere, including to the fire which I wanted to see just like everyone else.”

ARCHIE LEE MEIGHAN (Brian Landis Folkins)
Broke, frustrated, and resentful of his hard times, he runs a cotton gin on his dilapidated Mississippi estate. In his late 50’s, he is deeply obsessed with his young wife and will do whatever it takes to keep her by his side. Extremely short-tempered and unpredictable, he is quick to resort to violence.

ARCHIE LEE QUOTE
“Baby Doll, y’know they’s no torture on earth to equal the torture which a cold woman inflicts on a man… No torture to compare with it!”

SILVA VACARRO (Billy Finn)
An attractive man of Sicilian descent from New Orleans. He is the manager of the Syndicate Plantation that neighbors the Meighan estate. He is charismatic, hardworking, aggressive, and potentially dangerous.

SILVA VACARRO QUOTE
“Never mind about we Italians. You better get yourself a new saw-cylinder and get this contraption running again. And if you can’t get one in Clarksdale, you better go to Tunica, and if you can’t get one in Tunica, you better go to Memphis, and if you can’t get one in Memphis, keep going to St. Louis. Now get on your horse […] One more crack out of you, I’m going to haul across the river. I said get on your horse.”

AUNT ROSE COMFORT (Ouida White)
Baby Doll’s aunt. She is nearly deaf and often has no clue what is going on around her. Living with Baby Doll and Archie Lee, she is a perpetual caretaker, though, in her late 70s, she is well past her prime and, sometimes, her effectiveness.

AUNT ROSE COMFORT QUOTE
“I’ll—cook you some—eggs Birmingham!—These greens didn’t cook long enough. I played a fool trick with my stove. I forgot to light it! Ha ha! When I went to the store—I had my greens on the stove. I thought I’d left ‘em boilin’. But when I got home I discovered that my stove wasn’t lighted.”
Tennessee Williams’ BABY DOLL

1950’s Mississippi. Tensions run high in the sweltering heat on the dilapidated Meighan estate, and the young Baby Doll is stuck. She refuses to consummate the marriage to her aging, unattractive, cotton-gin-operating husband Archie Lee Meighan. Archie Lee lost all of his business when the neighboring Syndicate Plantation started ginning their own cotton; their furniture is being repossessed—save for a single baby crib—and he is broke and unable to care for his frustrated wife and her elderly, near-deaf Aunt Rose Comfort. When the Syndicate Plantation throws a raucous celebration one night, Archie Lee sees his impending ruin and decides to take action.

Late that evening, Archie Lee comes home to Baby Doll waiting on the porch, angry that he left her stranded so she couldn’t go see the fire that broke out on the Syndicate Plantation. Through flirtation, aggression, and ultimately physical force, Archie Lee makes Baby Doll swear that he was home asleep when the fire broke out.

The next morning, the manager of the Syndicate Plantation—a young, handsome Sicilian named Silva Vacarro—comes to the Meighan estate with twenty-seven wagons filled with cotton to be ginned. An elated Archie Lee goes to prepare the gin, instructing Baby Doll to entertain Silva. In an electric conversation wrought with sexual tension, Baby Doll lets slip to Silva that Archie Lee was not at home at the time of the fire, confirming Silva’s suspicions that Archie Lee committed the act of arson.

When Archie Lee leaves in search of a part for his broken-down gin and Aunt Rose Comfort goes to visit a friend in the hospital, Silva and Baby Doll are left completely alone. A heated confrontation that vacillates between flirtation and force ensues and Silva coerces Baby Doll into signing an affidavit legally stating that Archie Lee burned down the gin. Having accomplished his mission, Silva starts to leave with the intention of going home to take a nap, when Baby Doll—intrigued by this mysterious, alluring man—invites him to stay. Together, they retreat upstairs to her baby crib and fall asleep in each other’s arms.

Baby Doll awakes—rested, calm, and secure—just as an exhausted Archie Lee returns from repairing the gin. He is greeted by an unusually defiant Baby Doll and becomes suspicious when Silva emerges from the house. His dependence on Silva’s business forces Archie Lee to keep his jealousy and ire at bay. Frustration builds over a strained dinner and as Aunt Rose Comfort receives the brunt of Archie Lee’s anger. Eventually, he explodes in a furious rampage. Baby Doll takes action and calls the police as Archie Lee hunts her and Silva with a shot-gun. Before long the Sheriff arrives and takes a delirious and deranged Archie Lee away. Promising to return for both Baby Doll and Aunt Rose Comfort, Silva goes with the Sheriff for questioning. Baby Doll and Aunt Rose Comfort are left behind.
Thomas ("Tennessee") Lanier Williams was born in Columbus, Mississippi in 1911. Though his family moved to St. Louis when he was only seven, Williams' fondest and most formative memories were from his childhood in Columbus and Clarksdale, Mississippi where he lived with his maternal grandparents, his mother, and his sister (his father was a traveling salesman). The essence of the Mississippi Delta infused Williams' prolific outpouring (his oeuvre includes two dozen full-length plays, numerous one-acts, short stories, screenplays, a novel, and a memoir), and has become a defining characteristic of his literary legacy.

The Mississippi Delta lies between the Mississippi and Yazoo rivers, stretching from Memphis, Tennessee to Vicksburg, Mississippi. Plantation owners, who relied heavily on slave labor, settled on the fertile farmland in the 18th century. Clarksdale, Mississippi, the "golden buckle on the cotton belt" where Williams spent part of his childhood, was lush with wealthy white families who were steeped in a conservative and paternalistic Southern culture. Alongside this fantastic wealth, however, existed extreme poverty, exacerbated later by the Great Depression and mechanization of farm labor.

There was also a significant immigrant population in the Delta—notably Syrians, Chinese, and Italians. Italian farmers first came to America through the port of New Orleans and worked in cotton and sugar cane fields. Many suffered from the same sharecropping system that kept African Americans in poverty long after slavery was abolished. From the south of Italy, Sicilians immigrated to the Delta, settling in towns where they established businesses and took advantage of educational opportunities inaccessible to rural farmers. These hardworking people inspired multiple characters in Williams’ plays, including Silva Vacarro in BABY DOLL and the Delle Rose family in The Rose Tattoo.

The years leading up to 1956, when BABY DOLL was released as a movie, were particularly tumultuous in Mississippi as the wealthy white minority attempted to retain its position of privilege. In 1948, a radical faction of Mississippi Democrats split off to form the Dixiecrats, a political party whose platform read, in part, “We oppose the elimination of segregation, the repeal of miscegenation statutes, [and] the control of private employment by Federal bureaucrats called for by the misnamed civil rights program.” Six years later, in response to the ruling in Brown v. Board of Education, white segregationists in Mississippi established the first Citizens’ Council of America. By 1956, there were hundreds of Citizens’ Council chapters throughout the South boasting a total membership of 80,000. The brutal 1955 murder of Emmett Till, a young black man accused of whistling at a white woman, received national attention and exposed the abominable state of race relations in Mississippi. Later that same year, Rosa Parks refused to give up her seat on an Alabama bus, sparking a bus boycott that would launch the Civil Rights Movement.

The spirit of the Mississippi Delta pervades Williams’ writing and he was equally fascinated by its beauty and brutality. Not one to shy away from the more uncomfortable aspects of Southern culture or human nature, Williams demonstrated great empathy for his subjects and described his basic writing premise as, “the need for understanding and tenderness and fortitude among individuals trapped by circumstance.”
In preparation for experiencing BABY DOLL, share the linked article entitled “Tennessee’s Mississippi Muse” with your students by reading it aloud as a class. After reading, engage the students in a discussion about the article and share the writing prompts.

Reading Comprehension Questions

Lines 1-9
- Where did Tennessee Williams make his fondest and most formative memories?
- With whom did he live in Clarksdale?
- Based on its use in line 7, how would you define the word “oeuvre”?
- What has become a defining characteristic of his literary legacy?

Lines 10-15
- What is the name of the “fertile farmland” referenced in line 12?
- Infer why Clarksdale was nicknamed the “golden buckle on the cotton belt.”
- Define “steeped” as it is used in line 13.
- What was exacerbated by the Great Depression?

Lines 16-22
- What were the three ethnic groups primarily represented in the Delta?
- What system oppressed both immigrants and African Americans?
- How were Sicilian immigrants able to advance themselves in ways rural farmers could not?
- Based on the information in this passage, what might you presume about the character Silva Vaccaro in Baby Doll?

Lines 23-39
- Why were the years leading up to Baby Doll’s theatrical release tumultuous in this region?
- Based on its use in line 25 how would you define “faction”?
- What can you infer were the goals of the Citizens’ Council of America?
- Which two events were indicative of the state of race relations in 1950s Mississippi?
- Williams was fascinated by the beauty and brutality of what or whom?
- What can you predict about the circumstances of the characters in Baby Doll based on the quote from Williams in lines 38-39?

Writing Prompts

- What did you take away from this article that you didn’t know before about Tennessee Williams, the Mississippi Delta region, or its history and culture?
- Based off of this article, what might you predict about the story of BABY DOLL and its characters?
- Identify one way that Williams’ childhood and upbringing influenced his work.
- If you would like to utilize the article as practice for reading comprehension of informational texts, curricular, aligned questions are available here.

Written Reflection: If you had to identify one aspect of your childhood and upbringing that might have the potential to be your muse or a defining characteristic of your legacy (artistic or otherwise), what would it be? Why?
Struggling, complex and imperfect characters are a hallmark of Williams’ work. He was an empathetic champion of the outsider, a role Williams—who suffered from feelings of inadequacy and isolation exacerbated by the guilt and confusion he associated with his homosexuality—deeply identified with. His sensitive portrayals are most evident and celebrated in his multi-faceted female characters.

Williams adored his grandmother and sister growing up, and had a complicated relationship with his overbearing mother. An avid movie-goer, he also idolized actresses who would later serve as inspiration for characters. “Women give me the characters and the ideas and the language, and it is women who have brought me the food and the drink and the bits of cash to keep me going,” Williams reflected later in life. “I am entirely possible—by physical and artistic birth—because of women.” Fantasy and survival motivate and plague many of Williams’ female protagonists and he has been applauded for embracing and acknowledging women’s desires and sexual needs: needs that can be simultaneously empowering and overpowering. In SUMMER AND SMOKE, Alma Winemiller is the daughter of a minister, struggling to reconcile a deep attraction to a young doctor with the expectations of a young southern belle. A STREETCAR NAMED DESIRE features Blanche DuBois, a woman destroyed by her unrealized fantasies. Amanda Wingfield, Tom and Laura’s mother in THE GLASS MENAGERIE, is stuck in the past and obsessed with memories of gentleman callers. On the other hand, Maggie Pollitts from CAT ON A HOT TIN ROOF and Stella from STREETCAR have embraced their desires—they live off their needs and are devoted to their men.

Adaptor Emily Mann describes Baby Doll as “a young girl searching for who she is, and who gets awakened—both in terms of her sexuality and her own agency—in the process.” While comparisons to other iconic Williams’ characters can be made, Baby Doll—like Alma, Blanche, Amanda, Maggie and Stella—is a fully-developed person all her own, as multi-faceted as the women who filled and saved Williams’ own life.
The clothing we wear in our everyday lives often communicates information to others about who we are. In the theatre, clothes send us signals similar to those in everyday life; however, there are significant differences. Clothes often inform us about gender, status and even occupation but on stage this information is larger because every element in the theatre is featured. In everyday life what you where may not seem significant, but on stage the costume often opens the door to the very life of the play!

Stage costumes:

1. help establish the tone and style of a play
2. indicate the historical period and setting of a play.
3. show the status, occupations and personalities of the characters in the play.
4. indicate the relationships among the characters.
5. may reinforce the significance of individual characters or the theme of the play.
6. meet the needs of individual performers in terms of freedom of movement and quick changes.
7. should be consistent with other visual elements and the directorial vision of the production.

The play is set in the Mississippi Delta in November of 1952. The people in the show come from a similar social status.

The Characters:

BABY DOLL: Archie Lee Meighan’s wife, she is a beautiful young woman with the innocence and heart of a child.

ARCHIE LEE MEIGHAN: In his late 50’s, he is deeply obsessed with his young wife and will do whatever it takes to keep her by his side.

SILVA VACARRO: An attractive man of Sicilian descent from New Orleans. He is the manager of the Syndicate Plantation.

AUNT ROSE COMFORT: Baby Doll’s aunt. She is nearly deaf and often has no clue what is going on around her.

If you decide to give your students an opportunity to test their costume rendering skills, please share their work with us! We want to encourage them to explore and discover all of their talents. Who knows, the next great costume designer could be sitting in your classroom!
Spoiler Alert!!

PLEASE WAIT TO SHARE THE REMAINING CONTENT FOR CONVERSATION AND DISCUSSION AFTER THE PERFORMANCE!!
In the next class meeting following their attendance at the performance of BABY DOLL, ask your students to consider the questions below. You might choose to have them first reflect on the questions in writing, and then share their answers orally in either a full-class discussion or small-group breakout sessions.

Questions to Ask Your Students about the Play


2. What themes of the play especially stood out in production? Themes might include coming of age, revenge, being trapped, etc. What themes were made even more apparent or especially provocative in production/performance? Explain your responses.

3. Is there a moment in the play that specifically resonated with you either intellectually or emotionally? Which moment was it and why do you think it affected you?

4. Describe the pace and tempo of the production (e.g., slow, fast, varied). Did it feel like the pace of the production matched the inherent tempo of the story and/or was suited to the style of the play? Why or why not?

5. Was there anything about the play—for example, its story, structure, characters, language, dramatic style—that felt new or different to you in relation to your experience of other plays (either on the page or in performance)?

Questions to Ask Your Students about the Characters

1. Did you personally identify with any of the characters in BABY DOLL? Who? Why? If no, why not?

2. What character did you find most interesting or engaging? Why were you intrigued or attracted to this particular character?

3. What qualities were revealed by the actions/objectives, speech, and physicalization of the characters?

4. In what ways did the actions of the characters and/or their motivations reveal the themes of the play? Explain your responses.

5. Did any characters develop or undergo a transformation or make an emotional journey during the course of the play? Who? How? Why?

Questions to Ask Your Students about the Style and Design of the Production

1. Was there a moment in BABY DOLL that was so compelling, intriguing, entertaining, or engaging that it remains with you in your mind’s eye? Write a vivid description of that moment. As you write your description, pretend that you are writing about the moment for someone who was unable to experience the performance.

2. How did the overall production style and design suit the story, inform the characters, and reflect the central themes of BABY DOLL? Explain your response.
The action of BABY DOLL occurs in the course of two days. While this is a relatively short amount of time, the characters all go on individual journeys and undergo personal transformations. Discuss the emotional journey and transformations of each character with your students. Begin by having them diagram individual arcs for each character on their own using the Character Journey Diagrams. Once they have completed their diagrams have the students engage in a discussion about these journeys. Questions may include:

1. Which character faced the most difficult challenge?
2. Which character experienced the most dramatic transformation?
3. Did any of the characters not experience a transformation?
4. If the character behaved differently at the climax, would their transformation occur in the same way?
5. What could have been different? Who had the hardest journey to diagram? Why do you think this was?

At the end of the play, Baby Doll seems to believe that Silva will be returning the next day, but how sure is she? Engage your students in a discussion about their individual interpretations and beliefs about the play’s ending. Questions might include:

1. What was your initial reaction to the end of the play? Has that changed at all upon reflection?
2. Was there anything that surprised you about the ending?
3. What does the future hold for Baby Doll? Do you think Silva will return tomorrow? What line of dialogue or physical action made you believe this?

Next have your students write the next scene or a sequel to BABY DOLL that explores the character’s life after Archie Lee is hauled off by the Sheriff. Students may want to write a brief summary of what they think happens but select one moment to focus on for their scene. Some things they may want to consider:

1. Where does the scene take place? How much time has elapsed since the end of BABY DOLL?
2. Who is present in the scene and who isn’t - why?
3. What do the characters want or by what might they be confronted in the present moment?
4. What about the voice of the characters? Do they speak similarly to how they spoke in BABY DOLL? If not, what has changed?
5. Are there any specific production elements (e.g. set, lights, costumes) from BABY DOLL that reappear in this sequel? Why?

When the students have finished first drafts of their scenes, allow time for those who wish to share their work with the class to do so. A post-reading discussion of these scenes may include questions such as:

1. Which of the scenes most popped for your or struck you and why? (continued)
2. Was there a moment or a line of dialogue that stood out to you? Why?
3. What differences do you observe in the characters’ personalities, voices, etc.
INITIAL STATE
Describe who the character is and his/her state at the start of the play in terms of his wants/needs, behavior, beliefs, way of thinking, and/or being in the world.

CHALLENGE
Describe an event or moment in the play that suddenly challenges the character's initial state and leads to a profound (external or internal) conflict for him/her.

CLIMAX
Describe the highest point of tension or conflict in the character's journey.

TRANSFORMATION
Describe the character's behavior, beliefs, wants/needs, and way of thinking at the play's end. How has the character changed or transformed (internally or externally)?
Tennessee Williams’ Baby Doll
CHARACTER JOURNEY DIAGRAM

Character’s Name:
Tennessee Williams expert Thomas Keith, who has edited a few volumes of the playwright’s full-length and one-act works, offers the following quotation on the special nature of a Williams comedy:

“One reason Williams’ comedies are more difficult to categorize as such is because they are a lot like his dramas...Any demarcation line within a Williams play that might define it as a comedy is rather fluid—drama and comedy emerge simultaneously from the author’s experience, imagination and subconscious. In this Williams has something common with Chekhov and Beckett—his humor springs from the futile, lost, violent or desperate lives of the characters. And should you find them funny, well, then perhaps a nerve has been touched. There are numerous accounts of how during performances of his plays, Williams was liable to suddenly cackle wildly at a serious moment while others in the audience sat confused, wondering what was so funny or who the madman was at the back of the house.”

Questions to Ask Your Students about the Characters

Share the above quotation with your students, then have them reflect on their experience of seeing BABY DOLL in light of the quotation. Ask them to think back to what made them laugh, cringe, jump, cry etc., as they experienced the play in performance. Invite them to engage in a conversation about what it was about these specific moments that made them react so strongly. Questions might include:

1. When did you laugh the hardest in the course of the play? What made that moment funny?
2. Was there any moment that you found decidedly not funny, surprisingly serious, cringe-worthy, or tragic?
3. Was there a particular line or section of dialogue that made you react strongly? What was it and why did it affect you so strongly?
4. Were you ever surprised to find yourself laughing when other audience members weren’t? Was there a moment you were seriously moved while others were laughing?

After this discussion, instruct the students to write a persuasive argument for whether BABY DOLL is a comedy or a drama.
1. Give a very brief biography of Tennessee Williams life and work (see page 5).

2. Give the basic info below to the students about this particular play.

Mississippi Delta, early 1950s, where the summers are hot, but the livin’ isn’t so easy. Archie Lee has been married for some time to a seductive young woman/child, called only by the endearment of Baby Doll. By agreement with the girl’s now-dead father, the marriage can only be consummated on her 20th birthday, now just days away. Things get steamy and complicated when the manager of a successful nearby plantation swaggers in and sets his eyes on Baby Doll. Recommended for ages 16 and older for mature language and situations.

Baby Doll has only been produced by three other American theatres! New Stage was granted the rare - once in a lifetime - opportunity to produce the Southeastern Premiere of the new adaptation of Tennessee Williams’ screenplay Baby Doll. Adapted by Pierre Laville and Emily Mann from the film of the same name, Baby Doll is based on Tennessee Williams’ one-act play 27 Wagons Full of Cotton.

3. Share the article entitled Tennessee’s Mississippi Muse and consider using the reading comprehension questions and the writing prompts provided on the following page.
Student Evaluation Form—Tennessee Williams’ BABY DOLL

Name:_____________________________________ School:__________________________________

What parts of the play really got your attention?

What did you think about the costumes, props, and set?

Who was your favorite character? Why?

What other stories would you like to see onstage?

What else would you like to tell us about the play?

Share your thoughts with us! Return this form to your teacher or to Sharon Miles/ Education Director/ New Stage Theatre/ 1100 Carlisle St/ Jackson, MS 39202 or fax to 601.948.3538
Teacher Evaluation Form—Tennessee Williams’ BABY DOLL

Name: ___________________________________________ School: ___________________________

1. What is your overall reaction to the production?

2. How do you feel about the production values of the performance (costumes, set, performers, etc?)

3. How did your students react to the production? How did it impact them?

4. What is your overall reaction to the question and answer (talk-back) session?

5. How did you hear about the New Stage production of Baby Doll and what other plays would you like for your students to see?

Please list other comments and observations.

Please help New Stage by sharing your thoughts with us! Return form to:
Sharon Miles/ Education Director/ New Stage Theatre/ 1100 Carlisle St/ Jackson, MS 39202 or fax to 601.948.3538.
LEARN & EXPLORE MORE!

PORTIONS OF THIS STUDY GUIDE WERE GENEROUSLY PROVIDED BY THE EDUCATION STAFF AT THE McCARTER THEATRE IN PRINCETON, NEW JERSEY.

AMERICAN MASTERS AT http://www.pbs.org/wnet/americanmasters/search-results/?

https://www.biography.com/people/tennessee-williams-9532952