In the exam you must demonstrate understanding of the significance and influence of the contexts in which a play is written and received.

The list below is a starting point for topics which you will be expected to know more about as you read through the play. Remember that any contextual information offered in the exam should be relevant to the question asked. No credit can be given for contextual information that is included merely for its own sake; the play is the object of your studies and context should only be included to enhance your understanding and discussion.

Research one of the following events or influences on the play.

1. Biographical context
   - Tennessee Williams’ family background: parents, sister, family relationships etc.
   - his sexuality and his feelings about this
   - his mental health and his obsession with death
   - the themes and issues in his plays.

2. Social, historical and cultural context
   - the American civil war
   - the ‘old’ south versus the north
   - social class in the southern American states
   - post-second world war America
   - immigration and America as a ‘melting pot’
   - the position of women in the society depicted in the play
   - attitudes to homosexuality.

3. Literary context
   - American theatre (1900-1950)
   - realism
   - expressionism
   - southern Gothic
   - the genre of tragedy.