

Stanley Kowalski

Masculinity, particularly in Stanley, is linked to the idea of a brute, aggressive, animal force as well as carnal lust. His brute strength is emphasized frequently throughout, and he asserts dominance aggressively through loud actions and violence. Even his clothing is forceful: he dresses in bright, lurid colors. Stanley's masculinity is deeply connected to the "sub-human." Williams describes him as a "richly feathered bird among hens" and a "gaudy seed-bearer." A blue-collar worker, a brute, and a sexual predator, Stanley Kowalski emanates sexual magnetism and this is the foundation of his marriage.

Stanley's speech is generally clipped and specific, reinforcing his interest in reality versus Blanche's obsession with illusion and allusions. He openly antagonizes her because he sees her as a threat to the life he and his wife have built together.

Williams describes Stanley as a "richly feathered bird." He is the sort of hard working everyman with whom the audience initially sides—as opposed to Blanche's fickleness. However, we soon discover that he is the cliché male who works hard, plays hard, and easily becomes enraged when he has too much to drink. When he enters the room, he speaks loudly, sure of his authority, particularly in his own home.

When Stanley rapes Blanche, he implies that both of them wanted it. At the end, when Blanche is finally taken away to a mental institution, the way he consoles his distraught wife is by both comforting her and openly fondling her.

Much emphasis is placed on Stanley's physical body: he is frequently seen stripping his shirt off; cross at Blanche for not letting him spend time in the bathroom (where the audience cannot see him, but can imagine his naked form). Stanley asserts his masculinity physically as well as psychologically. Physically, he bellows in a sort of animal mating call at Stella. He also forces himself upon Blanche. Psychologically, he investigates Blanche's sordid past and brings it into the limelight, airing Blanche's dirty laundry (both literally and metaphorically) to affirm his position as not only the alpha male but also the head of the household. Yet although Stanley is aggressively animal in his male nature, his masculinity also asserts itself in his response to the feminine. He has tender responses to Stella's pregnancy; his tone shifts suddenly both when he breaks the news to Blanche and when Stella tells him that she is in labor. He also breaks down when Stella leaves him after he hits her.

Stanley is a prime specimen of manhood, but he is not a gentleman. Stanley represents the powerfully attractive but powerfully frightening threat of masculinity, whereas Mitch represents masculinity as a trait of comfort and refuge. If Stanley is the alpha male, Mitch is a beta male: still a masculine force, but not asserting the same kind of physical dominance over the space. But Mitch still finds his power through physical assertion. Mitch brags about his body to Blanche and insists on his precise measurements (six foot one, two hundred seven pounds). Even though Mitch isn't as violently male as Stanley, he is just as imposing a physical specimen. Blanche sees Mitch as male enough to radiate a carnal attractiveness, but not physically or psychologically dangerous in the way that Stanley is.