Streetcar named Desire Glossary

L&N Tracks- The Louisville and Nashville Railroad.

“Blue” Piano- The ‘blue’ refers to the music the piano plays. This piano is from a nearby location and spills through into the main setting.

Poor boy’s sandwich- Another word for a sub sandwich

Valice- A carry-on suitcase

Bodice- A sleeveless tight upper part of a dress, sometimes an undergarment

“They told me to take a streetcar named Desire, and then transfer to one called Cemeteries and ride six blocks and get off at--Elysian Fields!”- The Desire Line was a streetcar route in the early 20th century, as was the Cemeteries line. These names came from street names. Both of these lines ran around and through Elysian Fields, but in this case they are allegorical for the story we are about to see.

‘Por nada’- ‘No reason’ in Spanish, loosely translating to ‘for free’

‘Belle Reve’- ‘Beautiful dream’ in French, tying into Blanche’s illusions

Spasmodic- Brief and erratic

‘is the ghoul-haunted woodland of Weir!’- A nod to an Edgar Allen Poe poem in which he converses with Psyche, goddess of the soul

‘Only not so—highbrow?’- Likely a joke towards the supposed unkempt, thug behavior that rich people accused the Irish of in the early 20th century.

Polacks- A group of Polish people

Jax Beer- Jax was a brewing company in Florida operating between 1913 and 1956, although they also made beer out of New Orleans.

Laurel- Could be any number of places, likely Laurel, Mississippi?

Monkey doings- Monkey business. Dishonest or silly behavior

Galatoire's- Old fancy Creole restaurant in New Orleans

The Quarter- The French Quarter. The oldest neighborhood in New Orleans

"From the land of the sky blue water, They brought a captive maid"- First lines of 'From The Land of the Sky-Blue Water', a song by Charles Wakefield Cadman

Napoleonic Code- French ideas about heirship and property owning, which include husband and wife both owning the same things. Louisiana has a stronger influence of this code than other states.

Lemon Coke- Adding Lemon to a glass of Coke allegedly improves the flavor.

Atomizer- Fancy perfume spray bottle

Stella-For-Star- This one is obvious but Stella is Latin for 'star'.

Portieres- A curtain in place of a doorway

One-Eyed Jacks- The Jack of Spades and the Jack of Hearts, named because they traditionally face to the side and not towards the viewer

Sugar-tit- An old type of pacifier, a piece of cloth containing sugar for an infant to suck on

Seven Card Stud- A type of poker variation

Brassiere- Full word for a bra.

Rhumba- Type of music genre. Americanized, ballroom-like adaptation of Cuban and Afro-Cuban rhythmic music.

Xavier Cugat- Spanish musician and bandleader who grew up in Cuba

Going to 'the head'- Using the bathroom

'Some people get ants when they win.' -Getting antsy; refers to people leaving after winning their first round so they can't be beat and lose their winnings.

Spit in the Ocean- Another type of poker variation

Luckies- Lucky Strike cigarettes.

Mrs. Browning- Elizabeth Barette Browning, considered one of the greatest sonnet writers in English

French Huguenots- Calvinist French protestants who were persecuted by the French Monarchy and fled the country

Bobby-soxers- Wild young teenage girls who went crazy for pop singers. Basically a 1940s version of a Twitter stan.

Hawthorne, Whitman and Poe- Nathaniel Hawthorne, Walt Whitman and Edgar Allen Poe respectively, three noted writers.

Wien, Wien, nur du allein- German song by Rudolf Sieczynski about the wonders of Vienna.

Paper Doll- A hit song of the 40s, although it was written in 1915, about a guy who would rather have an inanimate object than a real woman as a girlfriend.

Whelp- A weak puppy. Considered somewhat derogatory

All quiet on the Potomac- A phrase from the Civil War meaning nothing violent is happening at the moment.

Chinese Philosophy- Likely a moment of racism referring to the (again, racist) idea that the Chinese are more likely to tolerate poor living situations.

Western Union- Multinational financial service company.

Operator- A phone operator, who used to be the one to transfer calls and log data before phones did this automatically. Would be reached by dialing 0.

Bromo- Bromine, often occurring in salt.

Seersucker- A thin, often cheap cotton fabric.

The Gulf- Likely the Gulf of Mexico.

The Four Deuces- Likely a bar or casino.

The Flamingo Hotel: A prostitution hotel.

The Evening Star: A newspaper.

Drug-Store: Drug stores were often hangout spots for teens of the time period.

The Arabian Nights: Referring to the 1001 Arabian Nights fairy tale stories.

Rosenkavalier: Reference to 'Der Rosenkavalier', a Richard Strauss opera. In Rosenkav (as it's often referred to shorthand), a 30 or so year old woman deals with the stresses of being unloved and becoming older by 'romancing' (read: grooming) a 17 year old boy. The audience is meant to sympathize with the 30 year old woman and not think about the horrid implications of her 'love', and it is seen as sad but inevitable when the boy instead chooses to be with a girl his age. It is no wonder Blanche would relate to such a work.

Lake Pontchartrain: An estuary in Louisiana. There was indeed an amusement park on its beaches at the time this takes place.

Gay- As you know, gay at the time meant happy and not… you know, gay.

Pleiades- A star cluster in the night sky sometimes regarded as a mini-constellation, visible within the head of Taurus.

joie de vtvre- a French phrase used in English to express enjoyment and spirit.

Bohemian- A socially unorthodox person, often also a poor artist.

"Le suis la Dame aux Camellias! Vous etes--Armand!" "I am the lady of the Camellias! You are Armand!" Reference to The Lady of the Camellias, a Dumas novel. The titular character has a flawed past but is redeemed through her love of Armand.

“Voutez-vous coucher avec moi ce soir? Vous ne comprenez pas? Ah, auelle dommage!”- Blanche is asking Mitch in French if he wants to sleep with her, only to muse that he doesn’t understand.