**Excerpt from Scene Six (p. 65-68)**

***Question: How does this passage combine detachment from reality with an evocation of tragic suffering?***

* The opening conversation seems very detached. Blanche’s responses to Mitch’s announcement about his dying mother (l.3, 5 and 7) are made emotionless by the use of simple periods. Perhaps this detachment announces Blanche’s entry into her memory and away from reality.
* This passage is a digression that takes us into Blanche’s tragic memory—it is an analepsis (: a flashback) that functions as a pause from the main plot. Blanche’s lengthy cues immediately emphasize the fact that this passage is a narrative pause. The stage direction on l.16-17 (“She crosses to the window […] another drink.”) is a dramatization of the storytelling and a visual manifestation for the audience that Blanche is looking away from reality and into the past.
* Blanche’s memory is of course tragic. Like in Greek tragedies where characters belong to a tragic lineage (e.g. the Atreides), her story functions as a tragic antecedent—a tragic flaw that will keep producing new tragic mechanisms. So, it is both a digression (i.e. a form of detachment from the main plot) and part of the tragic plot. Interestingly, Allan Grey’s tragic flaw is anticipated in the description of their first encounter as a “blinding light” (l.20). The choice of the adjective “blinding” is striking because it suggests the force—and therefore the inescapability—of the desire *and* how it made Blanche blind to who her lover truly was. That description is thus an echo of the play’s plot—something that announces what is about to come—while also offering a pause in its progression.
* When Blanche tells her story, the stage directions seem to echo the story itself. For example, music is heard when she tells Mitch that they went dancing to the Casino (l.36) and, more strikingly, the music stops when the fatal shot is fired (l.39). The adverb “abruptly” reinforces the impression that the music stops in response to Blanche’s story. This is interesting because, in an otherwise realistic play, the stage directions seem to present us with an echo of Blanche’s mind rather than the real world around her. This is yet another form of detachment from reality, one that is literally triggered by the evocation of Blanche’s tragic suffering.
* Another element of response concerns the structure of Blanche’s traumatic memory. The chronology of her story is reversed: from l.41 to 45, she tells Mitch about the moment of Allan’s death. From l.47 to 50 she goes back to what she’d told her husband which, according to her, made him kill himself. Such disorder is typical of trauma narratives, but more importantly this shift back in time happens when Blanche finishes describing the gruesome way Allan died. What seems to happen is that the traumatic sight brings her back to another traumatic element. In other words, her mind detaches itself from traumatic suffering but, in doing so, brings her back to another painful element of the memory.
* A final element to look at is Blanche’s metaphors from line 48 to 50: Blanche suggests that the “searchlight” turned on by her love for Allan Grey has been “turned off” and she then points to a prop on stage—a feeble candle, possibly to reflect her low enthusiasm for life and, perhaps more cruelly, to provide a visual clue for Mitch as to her inability to love him. Interestingly, the prop on stage—therefore the real object—is what she compares unfavourably with her memory. Besides, she describes it as a “kitchen – candle”, which contributes to anchor this visual metaphor in the routine of daily life. Blanche’s pause—with the dash—can also be read as a form of disgust. Her return to reality after her tragic story is thus marked by a form of rejection—of Mitch’s love and her surroundings. The consequences of tragedy are already felt in a present in which she wants no part.

I have underlined the passages where I am analysing the text. As you can see, each paragraph relies on a piece of analysis to provide or deepen the answer to the question. This is what is often missing from your papers.