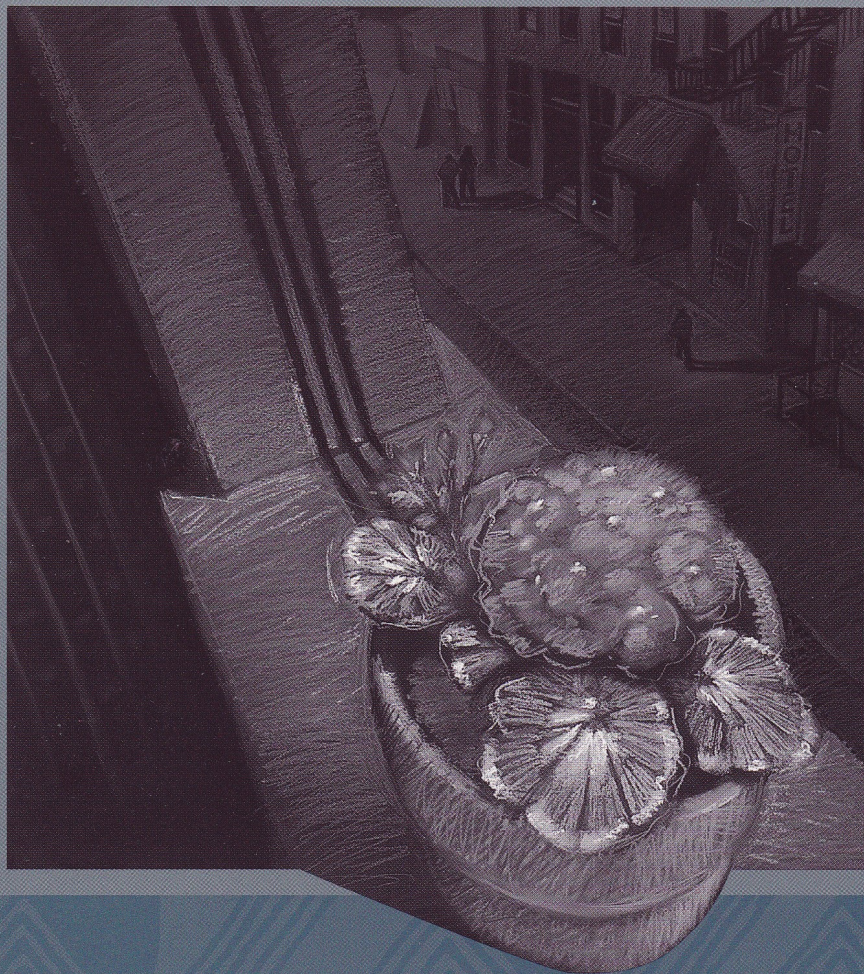


LITERATURE CONNECTIONS
SOURCEBOOK

A RAISIN IN THE SUN

L O R R A I N E H A N S B E R R Y



AND RELATED READINGS

MCDUGAL LITTELL

LITERATURE CONNECTIONS
SOURCEBOOK

A Raisin in the Sun

and Related Readings

Acknowledgments

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Parts of the SourceBook

- Table of Contents
- Overview Chart
- Customizing Instruction

Into the Literature: CREATING CONTEXT

- **Cultural/Historical/Author Background**
- **Critic's Corner** Excerpts from literary criticism about *A Raisin in the Sun*
- **Literary Concepts**
- **Motivating Activities**

Through the Literature: DEVELOPING UNDERSTANDING

- **Discussion Starters** Questions for the class to respond to orally after reading each act, including a Literary Concept question and a Writing Prompt
- **FYI Pages for Students** Reproducible masters that offer students background, vocabulary help, and connections to the modern world as they read the literature
- **FYI Glossary** Reproducible two-page glossary of difficult words for student use from each section of *A Raisin in the Sun*
- **Strategic Reading worksheets** Reproducible masters to help students keep track of the plot as they read (Literal and inferential reading)
- **Literary Concept worksheets** Reproducible masters to help students understand the use of literary elements such as mood (Critical reading)

Beyond the Literature: SYNTHESIZING IDEAS

- **Culminating Writing Assignments** Exploratory, research, and literary analysis topics for writing, covering both the main work and the related readings
- **Multimodal Activities** Suggestions for short-term projects; some are cross-curricular.
- **Cross-Curricular Projects** Suggestions for long-term, cross-curricular, cooperative learning projects
- **Suggestions for Assessment**
- **Test, Answer Key** Essay and short-answer test on *A Raisin in the Sun* and related readings and answer key
- **Additional Resources** Additional readings for students (coded by difficulty level) and teachers, as well as bibliographic information about commercially available technology

Links to The Language of Literature:

Connections can easily be made between *A Raisin in the Sun* and **Unit 5, Part 2, The American Dream: Illusion or Reality** in *The Language of Literature*, grade 11.

Overview Chart

PAGES FOR TEACHER'S USE		PAGES FOR STUDENT'S USE
Literature Connections	Source Book	Reproducible Pages
<i>A Raisin in the Sun</i>	Customizing Instruction, p. 4 Into the Literature: Creating Context, pp. 5–7 Critic's Corner, pp. 8–10 Literary Concepts: Theme, Characterization, Mood, pp. 11–12 Motivating Activities, p. 13	FYI, p. 24
<i>A Raisin in the Sun</i> Act One, pp. 1–56	Discussion Starters, p. 14	FYI, pp. 25–26 Glossary, p. 37 Strategic Reading 1, p. 39 Literary Concept 1, pp. 42–43
<i>A Raisin in the Sun</i> Act Two, pp. 57–102	Discussion Starters, p. 15	FYI, pp. 27–28 Glossary, p. 38 Strategic Reading 2, p. 40 Literary Concept 2, p. 44
<i>A Raisin in the Sun</i> Act Three, pp. 103–124	Discussion Starters, p. 16	FYI, pp. 29–30 Glossary, p. 38 Strategic Reading 3, p. 41 Literary Concept 1, pp. 42–43 Literary Concept 3, pp. 45–46 Literary Concept 4, p. 47
"Dreams," p. 126	Discussion Starters, p. 17	
"Emerald City: Third & Pike," pp. 127–131	Discussion Starters, p. 17	FYI, p. 31
"The Beach Umbrella," pp. 132–160	Discussion Starters, p. 18	FYI, p. 32
"Queens, 1963," pp. 161–163	Discussion Starters, p. 19	FYI, p. 33
"Everything That Rises Must Converge," pp. 164–183	Discussion Starters, p. 20	FYI, p. 34
"Judith's Fancy," p. 184	Discussion Starters, p. 21	
"Running from Racists," pp. 185–190	Discussion Starters, p. 21	FYI, p. 35
"What Is Africa to Me?— A Question of Identity," pp. 191–198	Discussion Starters, p. 22	FYI, p. 36
	Culminating Writing Assignments, p. 48 Multimodal Activities, pp. 49–50 Cross-Curricular Projects, pp. 51–54 Suggestions for Assessment, p. 55 Test, Answer Key, pp. 56–59 Additional Resources, pp. 60–62	

* Additional writing support for students can be found in **CommonSpace**

Customizing Instruction

Less Proficient Readers

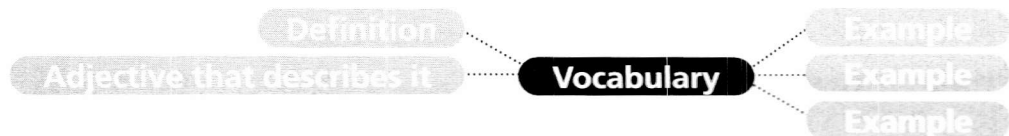
- Begin reading the play aloud in class or in small groups, assigning the parts in the first act.
- To help with literal comprehension of the plot, reproduce and have students use **Strategic Reading 1–3** worksheets, pages 39–41, as they read.
- Find a videocassette of the movie version or the TV adaptation of *A Raisin in the Sun* and allow students to watch it before they read the play. See **Additional Resources**, pages 60–62.

Students Acquiring English

- Explain to students the concept of dialect. Ask them to identify different dialects in their first language, and keep a chart comparing dialect and standard English in the play.
- Give students background about African-American history, including the Great Migration, the civil rights movement, and the Black Pride movement. Discuss how the situation for African Americans has both improved and stayed the same since the late 1950s.
- Ask students to identify forms of prejudice in their countries of origin. Discuss how they are similar to or different from that in the play.
- Use the suggestions for Less Proficient Readers listed above.

Gifted and Talented Students

- The three generations in the play experience prejudice in similar and different forms. Interested students can keep track of each generation's reactions and experiences as they read.
- Share the **Critic's Corner** literary reviews with students and have them discuss these reviews and write their own.
- **Vocabulary** Encourage students to learn the 25 asterisked words on the **Glossary** pages. Students can add these and other words to their personal vocabulary lists, practice using them in written paragraphs, use them orally, act them out when appropriate, or make word webs, such the one below, to explore their meanings.



Into the Literature

CREATING CONTEXT

A Raisin in the Sun

Lorraine Hansberry's most famous play almost never made it to Broadway. The producer, a music publisher and friend of Hansberry and her husband—Robert Nemiroff, had never produced a play before. At the time, most experienced producers and investors doubted that theatergoers would be interested in the struggles of a contemporary African-American family. The play's big break came when film actor Sidney Poitier read the script and agreed to play Walter Lee Younger. He also suggested that his friend Lloyd Richards direct the play. When *A Raisin in the Sun* finally opened on Broadway in March 1959, it was a smash hit. It ran for 530 performances—at that time, the longest-running African-American play on Broadway. It was also the first Broadway play written by an African-American woman and directed by an African-American man. A film version, released in 1961, was equally well-received. The drama remains one of the most anthologized American plays and is frequently revived in New York and around the world.

The Great Migration

The Younger family in *A Raisin in the Sun* was just one of the hundreds of thousands of 20th-century African-American families that migrated north to large industrial cities to find better economic and social opportunities. This migration began during World War I, when African Americans from the South went north in search of jobs in defense plants. By 1930, about a million African Americans had moved. It didn't take long for many of these people to discover that racism and segregation existed in the North as well.

Big cities like Chicago and New York had few opportunities for the untrained and largely uneducated African-American "immigrants," and many ended up doing the same kind of manual labor they had done in the South. The Ku Klux Klan, a racist organization promoting the supremacy of whites, had previously been mainly a Southern phenomenon. Now, as white Northerners reacted with fear and resentment against the large African-American population in their midst, the Klan made inroads in the North. Northern cities developed large ghettos such as Harlem in New York and the South Side of Chicago, where African Americans lived in crowded, often filthy slums.

The Lure of Africa

Throughout their history, many African Americans have had a strong sense of kinship with their homeland, the African continent. Like Beneatha, who is fascinated and frustrated by her African boyfriend Joseph Asagai, Lorraine Hansberry felt strong ties to Africa. Her last play, the posthumously produced *Les Blancs*, was set in an African country on the brink of a bloody revolution to overthrow colonialism.

Some examples of African-American interest in Africa include the "Back to Africa" movement of the 1920s under African-American leader Marcus Garvey; the expression of African-American pride and nationalism in the 1960s; the establishment of African and African-American studies departments on many college campuses; and the publication, in 1976, of Alex Haley's *Roots*, a partially fictitious account of his family's history, which began with the story of his ancestor Kunta Kinte, who was captured in West Africa and brought to America on a slave ship.

Hansberry's Life

Lorraine Hansberry was born in Chicago, Illinois, the setting of her first and most famous play, on May 19, 1930. Her father, a leading member of the African-American community, ran a successful real-estate business. Two of her uncles were professors at Howard University in Washington, D.C. Later, her father, a businessman and prominent African-American citizen, challenged the segregated housing practices of Chicago and, like the Youngers, moved his family into a previously all-white neighborhood.

When she finished high school, Hansberry chose not to go to Howard, like so many other members of her family, but to the University of Wisconsin, where she entered the freshman class in 1948. She dropped out of college two years later and moved to New York City to pursue a career as a writer. There, she attended classes at the New School for Social Research and got an editorial job on *Freedom* magazine, an African-American periodical run by famed actor and African-American spokesperson Paul Robeson. She married Robert Nemiroff, a Jewish student, and they moved to Greenwich Village. While working as a secretary, she began writing a play about African Americans in reaction to a play on the subject by a white playwright. "I suddenly became disgusted with a whole body of material about Negroes," Hansberry said. "Cardboard characters. Cute dialogue bits. Or hip-swinging musicals from exotic scores."

The play, at first entitled *The Crystal Stair*, later became *A Raisin in the Sun*. It opened on Broadway on March 11, 1959 and was a huge hit. Hansberry won the New York Drama Critics Award later that year, becoming the youngest American playwright to be so honored.

Her success, however, would soon be followed by tragedy. While working on her second play for Broadway, *The Sign in Sidney Brustein's Window*, Hansberry was diagnosed with cancer. She died on January 12, 1965. Her second Broadway play closed the same week.

Hansberry's husband, from whom she was secretly divorced the previous year, continued to edit and adapt her work. Several plays appeared after her death, including the dramatic anthology *To Be Young, Gifted and Black*, the longest-running Off-Broadway play of 1969, and *Raisin*, a musical based on her first play, which won the Tony Award for Best Broadway Musical of 1974.

Hansberry on Hansberry

On her own writing—

I have, like all of you, on a thousand occasions seen indescribable displays of man's very real inhumanity to man; and I have come to maturity, as we all must, knowing that greed and malice, indifference to human misery and, perhaps above all else, ignorance—the prime ancient and persistent enemy of man—abound in this world.

I say all of this to say that one cannot live with sighted eyes and feeling heart and not know and react to the miseries which afflict this world.

I have given you this account so that you know that what I write is not based on the assumption of idyllic possibilities or innocent assessments of the true nature of life—but, rather, my own personal view that, posing one against the other, I think that the human race does command its own destiny and that that destiny can eventually embrace the stars.

QUOTED IN *TO BE YOUNG, GIFTED, AND BLACK*: LORRAINE HANSBERRY IN HER OWN WORDS.

Critic's Corner

FRANK RICH

Rich, Frank. "Theater: Raisin in Sun, Anniversary in Chicago." *New York Times*, October 5, 1983.

Miss Hansberry, who died of cancer at the age of 34 in 1965, wrote *Raisin* well before the marches on Washington, the assassination of the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., and the inner-city explosions. Yet, with remarkable prescience, she saw history whole: Her play encompasses everything from the rise of black nationalism in the United States and Africa to the advent of black militancy to the specific dimensions of the black woman's liberation movement. And she always saw the present and future in the light of the past—clear back to the slavery of the Old South and the new slavery that followed for black workers who migrated to the industrial ghettos of the North.

AMIRI BARAKA

Baraka, Amiri. "A Critical Reevaluation: *A Raisin in the Sun's* Enduring Passion." *A Raisin in the Sun and The Sign in Sidney Brustein's Window*. By Lorraine Hansberry. Ed. Robert Nemiroff. New York: Viking, 1995.

Raisin lives in large measure because black people have kept it alive. And because Hansberry has done *more* than document, which is the most limited form of realism. She is a *critical realist*, in a way that Langston Hughes, Richard Wright, and Margaret Walker are. That is, she *analyzes* and *assesses* reality and shapes her statement as an aesthetically powerful and politically advanced work of art. Her statement cannot be separated from the characters she creates to embody, in their totality, the life she observes: it becomes, in short, the living material of the work, part of its breathing body, integral and alive. . . . All of *Raisin's* characters speak to the text and are critical to its dramatic tensions and understanding. They are necessarily larger than life—in impact—but crafted meticulously from living social material.

Critic's Corner

STEVEN R. CARTER

Carter, Steven R. *Hansberry's Drama: Commitment amid Complexity*. Chicago: U of Illinois P, 1991.

A paradoxically bold and subtle craftsmanship enabled Hansberry to conceive of a plot, superficially of the frequently despised "kitchen sink" variety, that could encompass so many of the deepest aspirations of her people through many generations, although artistry was, of course, needed to give the play its vitality and impact. When the musical *Raisin* intriguingly and successfully replaced the play's enclosing walls and its literal kitchen sink with a modern, nonrealistic set and substituted miming for real-life action, critics should have perceived how little the spirit of the play depended on a realistic setting. Just as Shakespeare expanded the boundaries of the revenge tragedy à la Thomas Kyd to include pressing political issues of his day as well as the most significant universal concerns, Hansberry stretched the domestic drama almost to the breaking point to include three hundred years of historical dreams and struggles as well as universal hopes and frustrations. The family in the play is the most extended one possible, all the generations of blacks brought to the United States represented in microcosm, and through them, finally (but not until they have been comprehended and embraced in the fullest measure), all of humanity.

ROBERT NEMIROFF

Nemiroff, Robert. Introduction. *A Raisin in the Sun*. New York: Signet, 1988.

I have been asked if I am not surprised that the play still remains so contemporary, and isn't that a "sad" commentary on America? It is indeed a sad commentary, but the question also assumes something more: that it is the topicality of the play's immediate events—i.e., the persistence of white opposition to unrestricted housing and the ugly manifestations of racism in its myriad forms—that keeps it alive. But I don't believe that such alone is what explains its vitality at all. For though the specifics of social mores and societal patterns will always change, the decline of the "New England territory" and the institution of the traveling salesman does not, for example, "date" *Death of a Salesman*, any more than the fact that we now recognize love (as opposed to interfamilial politics) as a legitimate basis for marriage obviates *Romeo and Juliet*. If we ever reach a time when the racial madness that afflicts America is at last truly behind us—as obviously we must if we are to survive in a world composed four-fifths of peoples of color—then I believe *A Raisin in the Sun* will remain no less pertinent. For at the deepest level it is not a specific situation but the human condition, human aspiration and human relationships—the persistence of dreams, of the bonds and conflicts between men and women, parents and children, old ways and new, and the endless struggle against human oppression, whatever the forms it may take, and of individual fulfillment, recognition, and liberation—that are at the heart of such plays. It is not surprising, therefore, that in each generation we recognize ourselves in them anew.

Critic's Corner

JAMES BALDWIN

Baldwin, James. "Sweet Lorraine." *To Be Young, Gifted and Black: Lorraine Hansberry in Her Own Words*. By Lorraine Hansberry, adapted by Robert Nemiroff. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice, 1969.

We really met . . . in Philadelphia, in 1959, when *A Raisin in the Sun* was at the beginning of its amazing career. Much has been written about this play; I personally feel that it will demand a far less guilty and constricted people than the present-day Americans to be able to assess it at all; as an historical achievement, anyway, no one can gainsay its importance. What is relevant here is that I had never in my life seen so many black people in the theater. And the reason was that never before, in the entire history of the American theater, had so much of the truth of black people's lives been seen on the stage. Black people ignored the theater because the theater had always ignored them.

But, in *Raisin*, black people recognized that house and all the people in it—the mother, the son, the daughter and the daughter-in-law—and supplied the play with an interpretative element which could not be present in the minds of white people: a kind of claustrophobic terror, created not only by their knowledge of the house but by their knowledge of the streets. And when the curtain came down, Lorraine and I found ourselves in the backstage alley, where she was immediately mobbed. I produced a pen and Lorraine handed me her handbag and began signing autographs. "It only happens once," she said. I stood there and watched. I watched the people, who loved Lorraine for what she brought to them; and watched Lorraine, who loved the people for what they brought to *her*. It was not, for her, a matter of being admired. She was being corroborated and confirmed. She was wise enough and honest enough to recognize that black artists are a very special case. One is not merely an artist and one is not judged merely as an artist: the black people crowding around Lorraine, whether or not they considered her an artist, assuredly considered her a witness.

Literary Concept

THEME

One theme that illuminates Hansberry's work is the difficulty and responsibility of living with and for one's dreams. The importance of having ideals and the price we pay for abandoning them can be seen in her two other Broadway plays, *The Sign in Sidney Brustein's Window* and *Les Blancs*.

The serious treatment of family, personal identity, and ideals, as well as the humanity of the characters lift *A Raisin in the Sun* above the level of a merely good realistic or social drama. Below are some of the other themes that readers have found in the play.

- Dreams can either save or destroy a person.
- It is crucial to develop and fight for your own values and ideals.
- Materialism and money, in themselves, are worthless.
- The family is the most important relationship in most people's lives.
- We do not simply live for ourselves, but for those who came before us and will come after us.
- One can start over at any age.
- It is better to fight with dignity than surrender in shame.

Presentation Suggestions Help students discover these and other themes as they read. You may wish to remind students that the **theme** of a literary work is an insight about life or human nature that the reader gains from the work. If you wish to have students discuss the major themes prior to reading the play, **Literary Concept 1**, pages 42–43, can be used as a prereading activity to explore theme. You might stop students at the end of each section of the play and ask which characters would agree with one or two of the themes, or which character the thematic statement might be describing at that point in the play.

Literary Concept

CHARACTERIZATION

One of Lorraine Hansberry's goals was to show her audience that African Americans are "just as complicated as they are—and just as mixed up—but above all, that we have among our miserable and downtrodden ranks people who are the very essence of human dignity." To achieve this goal, she used characterization.

Characterization refers to the techniques that a writer uses to develop characters. In fiction, a writer can describe a character's physical appearance and behavior in the narrative. In the script of a play, the writer provides some of the same information in the stage directions. In both fiction and drama, characters are revealed through their own dialogue as well as through the dialogue of others.

For example, in Act One, Ruth is described in the stage directions as a woman who was an exceptionally pretty girl but who now shows the effects of disappointment in her face. In her first speeches, she fusses at both her son and her husband. Walter mentions that she seems mad, that she has lost her young look, and that she and other black women are "some evil people at eight o'clock in the morning." Hansberry has skillfully combined description and dialogue to portray Ruth as a woman whose frustration with life is straining her relationships with her family.

Presentation Suggestions Remind students of the definition of characterization, and point out how the techniques are slightly different in drama than in fiction. You may want to work with them to find other examples from the first scene. Then, as students read on, encourage them to discuss what they know about the characters and how they know it. Students may use **Literary Concept 2**, page 44, to explore the way characterization is used in this play.

Literary Concept

MOOD

Mood is the feeling, or atmosphere, that a writer creates for the reader—or, in the case of a play, for the audience. Descriptive words, stage directions, and dialogue all contribute to mood. Often, the mood will change during the course of a scene.

In the first scene, when Travis is eating his breakfast, Ruth scolds him for asking about money, for not making his bed, and for not combing his hair. The dialogue and the stage directions show the friction between them, creating a mood of tension in the reader. Then, as Travis turns to leave, Ruth says in a mocking voice, "Oh, Mama makes me so mad sometimes, I don't know what to do!" The stage directions go on to say that such a teasing resolution to their conflict is "a way between them, very old and practiced." The sudden end to their bickering helps also to resolve the reader's tension, creating a feeling of relief.

Presentation Suggestions Students may use **Literary Concept 4**, page 47, to understand how stage directions and dialogue create specific moods in *A Raisin in the Sun*.

Motivating Activities

- 1. Concept Web** Ask students to work independently or in small groups to create a word web or other graphic organizer that explores one or more of the following concepts: *dreams, materialism, family, self-esteem*. You might encourage students who are having difficulty getting started to 1) define the concept, 2) give examples that illustrate it, 3) list some of the consequences associated with it.
- 2. Role-Playing** Have students discuss or role-play one of the situations that follow.
 - Imagine that your family suddenly wins the lottery. What does it feel like to have all that money? What will you do with it? What conflicts might arise among family members and others?
 - Your family moves into a new neighborhood, but your neighbors don't want you living there. They do everything to make your life unpleasant in your new home. Do you put up with it or move out?
- 3. Tapping Prior Knowledge: Modern African-American History** Invite students to work together as a class or in small groups to share what they know about African-American life in the 20th century. Record the students' facts and impressions on the chalkboard to be used as a reference as they work through the play and the accompanying activities.
- 4. Linking to Today: Prejudice** Help students explore their views on prejudice and racism by asking volunteers to identify examples of prejudice in the world today. Have them categorize their examples according to religious, racial, economic, and other factors. During the discussion, encourage students to think about individual acts of hatred as well as institutionalized prejudice against African Americans and other groups. You may wish to share the background information on pages 5 and 6 of this guide at this time. Conclude by suggesting that students compare the forces of racism and prejudice in *A Raisin in the Sun* with the real examples they have brought up.
- 5. FYI Background** Reproduce and distribute to students the FYI page (page 24) that gives background information on African Americans. You might reproduce and distribute all the FYI pages for the play at this time for students to refer to as they read the play.

Through the Literature

DEVELOPING UNDERSTANDING

BEFORE READING

You might want to distribute

FYI pp. 25–26, Glossary, p. 37

• Strategic Reading 1, p. 39

• Literary Concept 1, pp. 42–43

A Raisin in the Sun

ACT ONE

AFTER READING

Discussion Starters

1. Which character do you think is most entitled to part of the insurance money? Why?
2. Do you think Mama is a good parent? Why or why not?

CONSIDER

- ✓ her hopes and dreams for her family
- ✓ how well she understands her children
- ✓ the way she involves herself in their lives
- ✓ the values she tries to pass on

3. What do you think is the biggest problem in Walter and Ruth's marriage, based on what you have read so far? Explain your answers using details from the play.
4. **Literary Concept: Characterization** When Beneatha first appears, we are told that she is different from the rest of her family. What are some of the specific ways Hansberry shows us that she is different?

CONSIDER

- ✓ what she says
- ✓ what she does
- ✓ how other characters respond to her

5. This play was first produced in 1959. To what extent do you think the issues and problems portrayed in the play are still relevant today?

Writing Prompt

Write a **letter** to Walter Lee explaining whether you agree with him that "money is life" and why.

BEFORE READING

You might want to distribute



pp. 27–28, Glossary, p. 38

- Strategic Reading 2, p. 40
- Literary Concept 2, p. 44

ACT TWO

AFTER READING

Discussion Starters

1. What is your response to the loss of the insurance money? What do you expect to happen to the family now?
2. Do you think Mama's decision to buy the house in Clybourne Park is a wise one? Why or why not?
3. Why do you think Mama decides to entrust the insurance money to Walter? Did it accomplish what she wanted?
4. How do you think Walter has changed since the beginning of the play?
5. Why do you think Beneatha is so interested in Africa? In what ways does this interest come out?
6. How are the dreams of Lindner and the white residents of Clybourne Park both similar to and different from the dreams of the Younger family? Where do the two dreams clash?
7. **Literary Concept: Character** What is your opinion of George's character? Evaluate his good and bad qualities.
8. Asagai and George represent different positions on the question of assimilation. Asagai believes that people should study their roots and honor them, while George believes that people should try to blend in with the majority. What is your position?

Writing Prompt

What do you think were Walter's reasons for giving the money to Willy? Write an **internal monologue**, showing his thoughts as he decides to invest in the liquor store.

BEFORE READING

You might want to distribute



- pp. 29–30, *Glossary*, p. 38
- Strategic Reading 3, p. 41
 - Literary Concept 1, pp. 42–43
 - Literary Concept 3, pp. 45–46
 - Literary Concept 4, p. 47

ACT THREE

AFTER READING

Discussion Starters

1. Are you optimistic about the family's future? Explain.
2. Do you think Beneatha and Asagai have a future together?

CONSIDER

- ✓ whether their dreams are compatible
- ✓ their views on progress and human nature
- ✓ how they respond to adversity and defeat

3. Do you agree with Mama that Walter has “come into his manhood”? Why or why not?
4. Why do you think Walter changes his mind in regard to Lindner's offer? Do you think this change is realistic? Why or why not?
5. **Literary Concept: Mood** How does the mood of the play change when Walter meets with Lindner again? Why?
6. Do you think the problem of discrimination against African Americans who move into white neighborhoods has improved, worsened, or stayed the same? Why?

Writing Prompt

How do you think the Younger family will fare in their new home? Write an **extended scene** to the play that shows how they are treated when they move in and how they respond.

RELATED READINGS

Dreams

AFTER READING

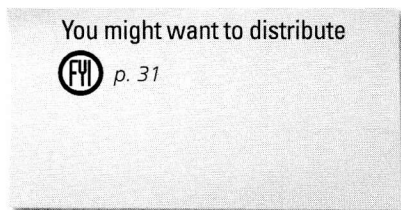
Discussion Starters

1. How did the last two lines of the poems make you feel? Why?
2. Do you agree with what this poem says about dreams? Why or why not?
3. Compare what this poem says about dreams to the theme of *A Raisin in the Sun*.

Writing Prompt

Continue the poem "Dreams," writing another **stanza** about the importance of dreams in your own life.

BEFORE READING



AFTER READING

Emerald City: Third & Pike

Discussion Starters

1. What do you think will happen to Oya? Why?
2. How much of Oya's story do you think is true? Why?
3. How do you think the narrator of the piece will be changed by this encounter? Or will she? Look at the ways she reacts to Oya.
4. Compare and contrast what this story has to say about dreams with what *A Raisin in the Sun* conveyed to you about dreams.

Writing Prompt

Write the **newspaper article** describing the "near-murder" that put Oya in prison. Give the details of the crime and include quotations from Oya and the woman she attacked.

BEFORE READING

You might want to distribute

 p. 32

The Beach Umbrella

AFTER READING

Discussion Starters

1. At the end of the story, Elijah concludes that “they thought he had stolen it . . . and maybe they were right.” What do you think he means by this?
2. What has Elijah decided at the end of the story? What do you think made him decide this?
3. Do you think Elijah’s decision at the end of the story is a victory or a defeat for him? Explain your answer, using details from throughout the story.
4. **Literary Concept: Symbolism** A symbol is a person, place, activity, or object that stands for something beyond itself. What do you think the beach umbrella represents for Elijah? Does this change from the beginning of the story to the end? If so, how?
5. Compare and contrast Elijah and Walter from *A Raisin in the Sun*.

CONSIDER

- ✓ their frustrations
- ✓ their dreams
- ✓ their relationships to their families
- ✓ their sense of responsibility

Writing Prompt

Imagine that Walter Lee from *A Raisin in the Sun* is joined by Elijah for a glass of lemonade. Write a **dialogue** between these two characters.

BEFORE READING

You might want to distribute



p. 33

Queens, 1963

AFTER READING

Discussion Starters

1. What is your reaction to the situation described in this poem? Describe it in a few words.
2. What do you think the speaker's attitude is toward what is happening in her neighborhood?

CONSIDER

- ✓ her assumption that the counselor's patients "too must have hypocritical old world parents"
- ✓ why she does not make a welcoming gesture
- ✓ what the look on the new girl's face reminds her of
- ✓ why she imagines a time "before the first foreigners owned / any of this free country"

3. How do you think the experiences of the new neighbors will be like and unlike the experiences of those who have moved to the neighborhood before them? Explain.
4. **Literary Concept: Irony** Irony is the contrast between what is stated and what is meant or between what is expected and what actually happens. Explain any ironies you find in the way the Haralambides, the Scotts, and Mrs. Bernstein respond to the new neighbors.
5. Compare this Queens neighborhood to Clybourne Park, where the Youngers are planning to move. How are the people who live in these two places similar? different?

Writing Prompt

Imagine you are the girl moving into this neighborhood. Write a **diary entry** in which you express your feelings about living there.

BEFORE READING

You might want to distribute



p. 34

Everything That Rises Must Converge

AFTER READING

Discussion Starters

1. What do you think of Julian's mother? Describe her in a few words.
2. Evaluate Julian's behavior toward his mother. In what ways is he right and in what ways is he wrong?
3. What is "the world of guilt and sorrow" the author refers to in the last line of the story?
4. What do you think Julian's motives are for talking to the African-American man on the bus? Give reasons for your answer.
5. Why do you think the African-American woman strikes Julian's mother? In your opinion, is she justified?
6. Why do you think O'Connor chose this title? How does the title of the story relate to the three main characters?

CONSIDER

- ✓ Julian's mother's statement: "They should rise, yes, but on their own side of the fence."
- ✓ the circumstances that make the two women mirror images of each other

7. Compare the characters in this story to characters in *A Raisin in the Sun*.

CONSIDER

- ✓ who Julian is most like
- ✓ who his mother is most like
- ✓ who the woman on the bus is most like

Writing Prompt

Imagine you are Julian. Write a **letter** to a college friend about what happened to your mother. Has it changed your life? How?

Judith's Fancy

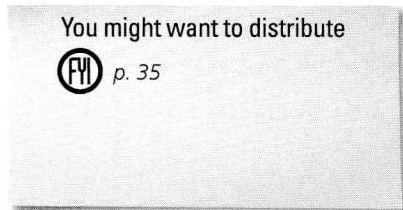
AFTER READING

1. How did you react to the last two lines of the poem? Explain.
2. **Literary Concept: Imagery** Imagery consists of descriptive words and phrases that create pictures in the reader's mind. Which lines of this poem left vivid pictures in your mind? How do those pictures add to your understanding about what is happening in the poem?
3. How is the situation presented in the poem similar to or different from the situation in the play? Explain.

Writing Prompt

Write a **dialogue**, in which the speaker tells her daughter about the encounter described in the poem. Have her speculate about why the new neighbor and her son reacted the way they did.

BEFORE READING



Running from Racists

AFTER READING

Discussion Starters

1. If Joann Long were a friend who told you this story personally, what would you say to her?
2. What do you think was the greatest cost to the Longs—financial, emotional, or something else? Explain, using details from the article to support your answer.
3. What do you think the school and community should have done to deal with the problem with the skinheads?
4. What advice do you think the Younger family might have for the Long family after their son was pursued by skinheads in their neighborhood?
5. Do you think what happened at Barry Goldwater High School could happen at your high school? Why or why not?

Writing Prompt

Imagine you are a student at Barry Goldwater High School. Write an **editorial** about racism at school for the student newspaper.

BEFORE READING

You might want to distribute

 p. 36

What Is Africa to Me?— A Question of Identity

AFTER READING

Discussion Starters

1. What does Africa mean to Pauli Murray? How do you know this?
2. Do you think other Americans who go home to the country of their ancestors would have similar experiences? Give reasons for your answer.
3. How do you think a Ghanaian coming to America would feel about the United States and its African-American people?
4. Do you think Joseph Asagai would agree with Pauli Murray's assessment of Africans sharing the responsibility of slavery? Why or why not?

Writing Prompt

Using the point of view of a person from Ghana, write a **description** of Pauli Murray.



These pages for the students give background, explain references, define vocabulary words, and help students connect the modern world with the world of Lorraine Hansberry. You can reproduce them and allow students to read them before or while they are reading the works in Literature Connections.



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A Raisin in the Sun

BACKGROUND

Where Did You Get That Title?

African-American poet Langston Hughes (1902–1967) was one of Lorraine Hansberry's favorite writers. While working on her play, she took the title from a line of Hughes's poem "Mother to Son," and called it *The Crystal Stair*. When she finished the play, she changed the title to a line from another Hughes poem called "Harlem," and included the entire poem as the epigraph to the play.

LITERARY CONCEPT

Epigraph

An epigraph is a motto or quotation that appears at the beginning of a work and generally relates to the theme of a work. The first three lines of Hughes's poem are "What happens to a dream deferred? / Does it dry up / Like a raisin in the sun?" Think about what this epigraph leads you to expect from the play.



What a Cast!

The original Broadway cast of *A Raisin in the Sun* reads like a *Who's Who* of African-American film and theater today.

Claudia McNeil found the role of a lifetime in Lena Younger, the strong matriarch of the family, which she also played in the film version.

Diana Sands (Beneatha) was one of the most renowned African-American theater actresses until, like Hansberry, her life was cut short by cancer.

Ruby Dee (Ruth) and Ossie Davis (Sidney Poitier's replacement as Walter) became the most celebrated African-American couple in show business.

Ivan Dixon (Joseph Asagai) and Louis Gossett, Jr., (George Murchison) went on to busy careers on stage and screen. Gossett won an Academy Award as Best Supporting Actor in *An Officer and a Gentleman*.

Lonnie Elder III (Bobo) became a celebrated playwright.

The Great Migration

Like the Youngers, many African Americans migrated from the South in search of better opportunities in the North. The following chart shows the number of people who migrated to and from the South over a period of 90 years. Positive numbers show an increase in population; negative numbers show a decrease. Notice in which decades the South lost the largest number of people. Also, compare the numbers of whites who left to the numbers of non-whites.

Net Migration to and from the South by Color and Decade, 1870–1960 (In 1,000s)						
Decade	TOTAL SOUTH			SOUTHEAST (11 STATES)		
	Total	White	Non-White	Total	White	Non-White
1870–1880	+ 11	+ 82	– 71	– 304	– 205	– 99
1880–1890	– 411	– 328	– 83	– 515	– 405	– 110
1890–1900	– 143	+ 52	– 195	– 849	– 537	– 312
1900–1910	– 274	– 77	– 197	– 872	– 605	– 267
1910–1920	– 1,088	– 566	– 522	– 1,219	– 642	– 577
1920–1930	– 1,576	– 704	– 872	– 1,704	– 778	– 926
1930–1940	– 756	– 349	– 407	– 651	– 188	– 463
1940–1950	– 2,135	– 538	– 1,599	– 1,880	– 365	– 1,515
1950–1960	– 1,403	+ 53	– 1,456	– 1,078	+ 381	– 1,459
Totals	– 7,777	– 2,375	– 5,402	– 9,072	– 3,344	– 5,728

Source: Adapted from C. Horace Hamilton, "The Negro Leaves the South," *Demography* 1, no. 1 (1964): 279.



Act One

VOCABULARY

Some Cool Expressions

fly-by-night proposition	a business scheme that is questionable and not to be trusted
right peaked	very pale or sickly looking
hither and yon	scattered all over the place

Scene 1

A City Divided

While it is a great American city, Chicago has not had a great record for its treatment of African Americans. In fact, some people claim that it is the most racially segregated city in the nation. The South Side, mostly inhabited by African Americans, had increasing problems with poverty, crime, and overcrowding through the 1950s and 1960s. These problems were compounded as more and more white residents fled the inner city for the suburbs. Riots sparked by the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., in 1968 led to 11 deaths and millions of dollars in property damage. The election in 1983 of Harold Washington, Chicago's first African-American mayor, gave many African-American Chicagoans renewed hope that they could participate in the political process and improve their lives.

Scene 2

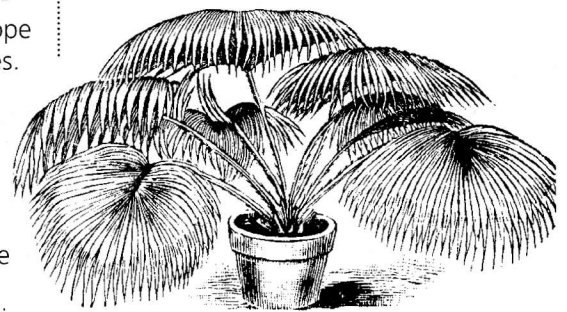
Are You Assimilated?

When Joseph Asagai, an African, accused Beneatha of trying to assimilate into white society, he was expressing the feelings of millions of African Americans, who strongly believe that assimilation is a negation of the individual's African identity and heritage. "Conking," straightening naturally curly hair with lye and other chemicals, was a common practice for many African Americans. Also common was the use of skin cremes designed to correct discoloration, but which had the effect of creating lighter skin tone.

With the civil rights movement of the 1950s and the black power movement of the late 1960s, more and more young Afro-Americans, as they called themselves then, refused to adopt white styles and wore African hair styles and fashions as a proud badge of their heritage.

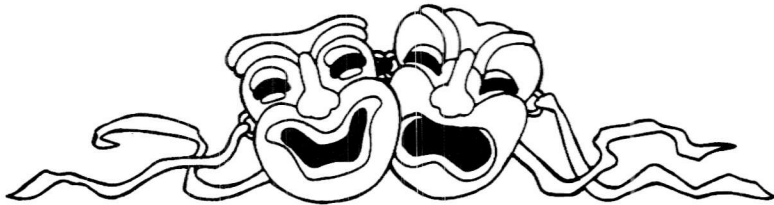
Is There a Doctor in the House?

To become a doctor, Beneatha will have to go through years of training. First, she must complete four years of undergraduate study, concentrating on such subjects as biology and chemistry. Then she will have to go through four years of medical school. After graduating from medical school, she will have to serve at least a year as a hospital intern, working under the supervision of experienced doctors. Finally, to become a surgeon or other specialist, she would have to train a year or more as a hospital resident. Becoming a doctor requires intelligence, hard work, determination—and a lot of money!





Act One (continued)



LITERARY CONCEPT

Stage Directions

Most plays include stage directions—instructions for the director, performers, and crew. These directions also may describe the scenery—decorations, props, or lighting that help create the setting. Hansberry uses her stage directions to describe the Youngers' living room. This description not only tells what objects are in the room and where they are placed, but also reveals much about the family itself. For example, the sentence "Now the once-loved pattern of the upholstery has to fight to show itself from under acres of crocheted doilies and couch covers" reveals the pride with which the Youngers once furnished the room, the poverty that has prevented them from maintaining their surroundings, and their determination to keep things as nice as they can. As you read, be aware of what else you learn about the world of Hansberry's characters through her stage directions.

Scene 2

Nigeria—Asagai's Homeland

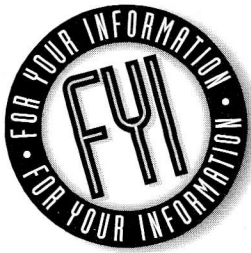
Located on the western coast of Africa, Nigeria is the most populous of all African countries. Here are some facts about this fascinating country:

- Population: 127,879,000 (1992 est.)
- Size: about 1.3 times the size of Texas
- Economy: Based on oil production and agriculture
- Ethnic groups: 250 tribal groups. Yoruba (Asagai's tribe) is the second-largest.
- Religion: Half the population is Muslim, and more than a third is Christian. Animism is also observed by the remainder of Nigerians, as well as by some Muslims and Christians.
- Language: Official language is English, but tribal languages include Yoruba, Ibo, and Hausa.
- Won independence from British: October 1, 1960

LITERARY CONCEPT

Dialect

Dialect is the particular variety of a language spoken in one geographical area by a distinct group. Dialect includes the pronunciations, vocabulary, expressions, and grammatical constructions used by the people of a region. When Mama says, "much baking powder as she done borrowed from me all these years, she could of done gone into the baking business!" Hansberry uses her dialect to reveal Mama's wry humor, her frustration, her educational level, and her social background. As you read, look for examples in the play's dialogue where dialect helps to reveal character.



Act Two

Scene 1

The Great Empires of Western Africa

- The **Ashanti** are the largest and most influential ethnic group in Ghana. The Ashanti Empire, in the early 19th century, included much of Ghana, the eastern Ivory Coast, and western Togo.
- The **Songhai** Empire lasted nearly 800 years. It stretched from present day Nigeria to the Atlantic Coast. The Moroccans defeated the Songhai in 1591, bringing the long reign to an end.
- The **Benin** kingdom flourished from the 15th century to the mid-17th century. Its center of power was the forest region of today's Nigeria. Its source of prosperity was trade with the Portuguese and others.
- The **Bantu** migrated from Cameroon into much of Central, Eastern, and Southern Africa by 1500. They established many Central African kingdoms that were later weakened by European colonial powers.

VOCABULARY

Words from or about Walter

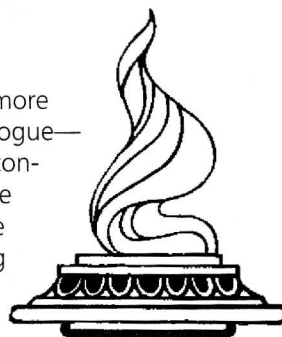
(spoken by or
referring to
Walter Lee)

fraternal	brotherly
sobriety	the state of being sober, not drunk
crackers	slang for white people, originally poor whites in the South
exuberant	elated, very enthusiastic

LITERARY CONCEPT

DIALOGUE

Dialogue is written conversation between two or more characters. A play is created almost entirely of dialogue—conversation between characters. Through these conversations, we learn everything we know about the characters. Think about what is revealed about the relationship between George and Beneatha during their conversation in this section.



Scene 1

"That's My Man, Kenyatta!"

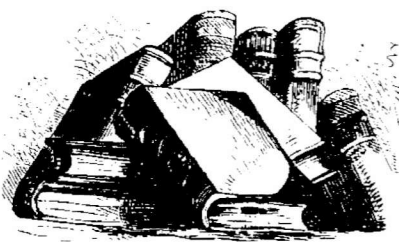
Walter's admiration for **Jomo Kenyatta** (1890?–1978) is an understandable one. Jomo means "flaming spear," which is what Walter calls himself in this scene. The first president of the east African nation of Kenya, Kenyatta was a major spokesman for African nationalism and helped lead the fight against British colonialism in his country. Under his leadership, Kenya, which won its independence in 1963, progressed both politically and economically. Perhaps Kenyatta's greatest legacy for the African continent was his attempt to unite a diverse population of Africans, Asians, and Europeans to work together for the common good of their country.

Who Was Prometheus?

George may have been joking when he called Walter "Prometheus," but the name was not wholly unflattering. In Greek mythology, Prometheus was an early god, one of the Titans. When Zeus, king of the gods, schemed to destroy humanity by denying them fire, Prometheus stole fire from the gods and gave it to humans. For his "crime," Prometheus was chained to a rock and his liver daily eaten by an eagle. Each night the liver grew back. He was finally freed from his ordeal by the hero Hercules, who killed the eagle and broke his chains.



Act Two (continued)



Scene 2

Going to College

By the late 1950s, more and more young African Americans, like Beneatha and George, were going to college. Many attended African-American colleges and universities out of choice or because they were not welcomed at traditional white-run schools. One of the largest and most prestigious is Howard University in Washington, D.C. Howard was founded in 1867 by members of the First Congregational Society, who wanted to establish a school for formerly enslaved African Americans. The school was named for a Civil War general, Oliver Otis Howard. Two of Lorraine Hansberry's uncles taught African history and sociology at Howard, and several other members of her family studied there.

Scene 3

Carl Hansberry, Hero

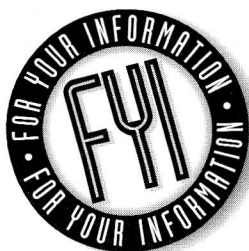
Lorraine Hansberry's family, like the Youngers, had attempted to live in an all-white neighborhood when she was a child. Carl Hansberry, her crusading father, moved the family into a white neighborhood to challenge Chicago's discriminatory housing laws. One night, a mob of angry white residents gathered on the family's front lawn, and someone hurled a brick through the living room window. It barely missed striking nine-year-old Lorraine.

A suit filed by Carl Hansberry against the city was rejected by the state court, but the United States Supreme Court later ruled in his favor. Chicago's politicians, however, managed to skirt the law, and Chicago remained a largely segregated city. Disillusioned and bitter, Carl Hansberry bought a house in Mexico and was planning to relocate his family there when he died of a stroke in 1945.



Capital City

The reason that Bobo and Willie plan to go to Springfield "to spread money around" so they can get their liquor license is that Springfield is the capital city of Illinois. The city houses the state government and the officials and politicians who run it. Approximately 190 miles from Chicago, Springfield was home to Abraham Lincoln from 1837 to 1861. Imagine what "Honest Abe" would say to the idea that it's a common practice to bribe state officials to get what you want.



Act Three

VOCABULARY

Pick on Walter

In this act Beneatha hurls several taunts at her brother. These include the following:

Monsieur le petit bourgeois noir French Mr. lower-middle class black

Titan of the System A giant of the business world. In Greek mythology, Titans were giants.

Hansberry's Play About Slavery

Walter jokes bitterly about his family's slave past in this act. Hansberry examined slavery in one of her least-known plays, *The Drinking Gourd*. The title refers to the Big Dipper constellation that led many runaway slaves north to freedom. The central character, Hiram Sweet, is a Southern slave holder who, despite the evil institution of which he is a part, is a decent man. Later in the play, Sweet falls ill. His villainous son who takes over blinds a young slave upon discovering he has learned to read. Still determined to be free, the slave is led north at night by his faithful girlfriend.

The Drinking Gourd was written for television to commemorate the centennial of the Civil War, but it was rejected by the networks for being too depressing and controversial. A little over a decade later, the dramatization of Alex Haley's book *Roots* would prove the television executives wrong in their assessment that African Americans wanted only to forget slavery as a part of their past.

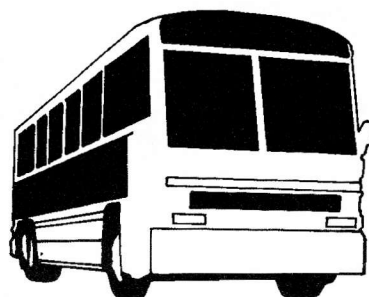
Asagai's Future

As a playwright, Hansberry proved to be somewhat prophetic in this act. Asagai predicts that even after his country gains independence, there will be struggles. However, he believes those conflicts will be between black countrymen, not between the Nigerians and the British. Sadly, this prediction proved correct. During the years that followed Nigerian independence in 1960, several ethnic groups competed for political power. Nigeria has suffered a devastating civil war and numerous military takeovers of the government. As Asagai expected, there has been "retrogression . . . guns, murder, revolution."

Integrating America—the Birth of the Civil Rights Movement

While African-American families like the Youngers were moving into white neighborhoods in the North, others were challenging segregation laws throughout the South. Some milestones in the civil rights movement are as follows:

- December 1955—African-American seamstress Rosa Parks refuses to give up her bus seat to a white passenger. In response to her subsequent arrest, the African-American community staged a successful bus boycott.
- February 1960—Four African-American college students in Greensboro, North Carolina, refused to leave a Woolworth's lunch counter when a waitress would not serve them coffee. It became one of the movement's first nonviolent "sit-ins."
- August 1963—Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., and other civil rights leaders organized the "March on Washington," the nation's capital, that included over 200,000 people.





Act Three (continued)

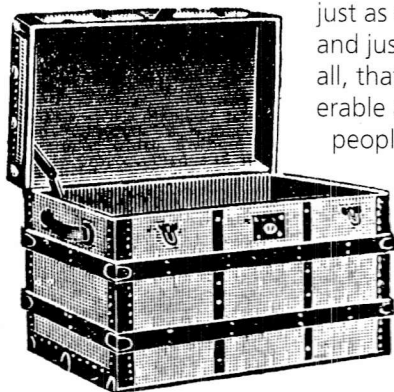
Lorraine Hansberry— Political Activist

Hansberry remained an active spokesperson for African-American equality and other worthy causes throughout her adult life.

Upon her arrival in New York City in the early 1950s, she participated in political rallies and demonstrations. She met her future husband, Robert Nemiroff, on a picket line at New York University.

After fame came with the success of *A Raisin in the Sun*, she appeared frequently on television and radio programs, expounding her views on civil rights and world peace.

In 1964, she wrote the text for a book of photographs about the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), a civil rights organization. The book was called *The Movement: Documentary of a Struggle for Equality*.



On the Road with A Raisin in the Sun— A Letter to Mom

Hotel Taft
New Haven, Conn.
January 19, 1959

Dear Mother,

Well—here we are. I am sitting alone in a nice hotel room in New Haven, Conn. Downstairs, next door in the Shubert Theater, technicians are putting the finishing touches on a living room that is supposed to be a Chicago living room. . . .

The actors are very good and the director is a very talented man—so if it is a poor show I won't be able to blame a soul but your youngest daughter.

Mama, it is a play that tells the truth about people, Negroes and life and I think it will help a lot of people to understand how we are just as complicated as they are—and just as mixed up—but above all, that we have among our miserable and downtrodden ranks—people who are the very essence of human dignity. That is what, after all the laughter and tears, the play is supposed to say. I hope it will make you very proud. See you soon.
Love to all.

African-American Playwrights Take the Stage

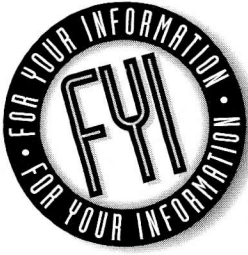
No African-American writer had crossed over to mainstream success in the Broadway theater before Lorraine Hansberry, but many of them had loved the theater and written for it. Here are some examples:

Langston Hughes, best known today for his poetry, wrote numerous plays and even had his own theater company at one time.

Poet Countee Cullen's last work was the book (the written play or libretto) of the Broadway musical *St. Louis Woman*.

James Baldwin, a good friend of Hansberry's, wrote several plays in the 1960s, including the powerful indictment of racism, *Blues for Mister Charlie*.

Today, the African-American experience continues to be celebrated on stage in the stirring plays of August Wilson. Many of his works have been initially directed by Lloyd Richards, the man who brought *A Raisin in the Sun* to Broadway.



Emerald City: Third & Pike

BY CHARLOTTE WATSON SHERMAN

Background

Homelessness has become a growing concern in the United States. Once found only in large cities, homeless people can now be seen in nearly every city and large town in America. The exact number is impossible to determine, even by the experts. Estimates range from 50,000 to over 3 million. Here are some more facts about the homeless in America:

- States with the greatest number of homeless
California
New York
Florida
Pennsylvania
- American cities with the greatest number of homeless people
New York City
Los Angeles
Chicago
San Francisco
San Diego
Washington, D.C.

VOCABULARY

Oya Speaks Out

Oya, the homeless woman in this story, speaks in colorful language. Here are a few examples:

stuff	foolish, worthless speech
earful	a scolding
spineless	lacking courage
cushy	slang for comfortable or easy
body	a person
beefy	fat or fleshy

Who and Why?

Twenty years ago, most homeless people were single men who were down on their luck and who often had alcohol or drug problems. Today the fast-growing homeless population includes families with young children. Many of these families had good homes in nice neighborhoods that they lost when the parents lost their jobs and could not meet the mortgage or tax payments.



Family Tree

The stories Oya tells passersby about her family reveal little-known aspects of African-American history.

- Her uncle was a cowboy. One out of every seven cowboys was an African-American. A book detailing the life of one of these is *The Life and Adventures of Nat Love*.
- Her grandfather fought in the Civil War. All told, nearly 300,000 African Americans served in the Union Army.



The Beach Umbrella

BY CYRUS COLTER

Background

Cyrus Colter wrote *The Beach Umbrella*, *The Rivers of Eros*, *Night Studies*, *The Hippodrome*, and *A Chocolate Soldier*. In addition to being an author, he is an attorney and the former Commerce Commissioner of the state of Illinois. He also taught at Northwestern University, where he chaired the Department of African American Studies and held the Chester D. Tripp Professorship in the Humanities. Like the characters in "The Beach Umbrella," Colter lives in Chicago.

Brolliology for Beginners

Brolliology is the study of umbrellas. The earliest umbrellas, unlike the beach umbrella in the story, were not primarily used to provide shade from the sun, but as part of ceremonial and religious festivities. For the early Egyptians, umbrellas and the shade they provided symbolized regal and priestly power. The Greeks carried umbrellas in parades and festivals in honor of Bacchus, the god of wine and productivity.

In the early 1600s, John Hanway brought one of the first umbrellas into England from Portugal. Londoners laughed at him for carrying an umbrella around town but probably changed their minds when they saw that he stayed dry in a rainstorm!

VOCABULARY

Beach Talk

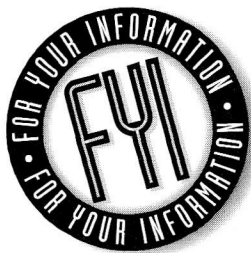
The author uses some vivid words to describe the beach and the people who visit it.

languor	lack of energy, fatigue
buffoonery	clowning around
boisterous	noisy, exuberant
garish	colorfully gaudy
rambunctious	wild, unruly
sweltering	extremely hot



On the Waterfront

Going to the beach has been a popular American pastime since the 1800s. It was a particularly attractive and inexpensive outing for working class people, as is shown in this story. Many of the nation's most famous beaches, such as Atlantic City in New Jersey, are on the ocean. However, even some inland cities such as Chicago have extensive and quite beautiful beaches. Chicago is located on the shore of Lake Michigan; miles of this waterfront were developed into parkland instead of being used for buildings. In addition to beaches and harbors, this lake-front park contains bicycle paths, golf courses, and playing fields.



Queens, 1963

BY JULIA ALVAREZ

Background

Like the speaker in this poem, Julia Alvarez knows how it feels to be an immigrant. Alvarez was only ten years old when her parents were forced to emigrate from their native Dominican Republic. Her first book, *Homecoming*, was published in 1984. Her first novel, *How the Garcia Girls Lost Their Accents*, was proclaimed by the *New York Times Book Review* as one of the "notable books of 1991." Her second novel, *In the Time of the Butterflies* (1994), deals with actual events in her native land. It explores in fiction the mysterious deaths of three sisters in 1960 during the Trujillo years. Alvarez is a professor of English at Middlebury College in Vermont, where she lives with her husband.

Strolling Through Queens

Located in the northwest corner of Long Island, Queens is one of the five boroughs, or areas, of New York City. Here are some facts about Queens:

- Largest borough in size (126 square miles)
- Second borough in population (est. 2,000,000)
- Home to New York's two largest airports—JFK International and La Guardia
- Every September a Queens neighborhood, Flushing Meadows, plays host to the U.S. Open, one of the greatest tournaments in tennis.
- Queens is also home to many different ethnic groups. This gives it a truly international flavor. The makeup of these groups has shifted over the years, but has included Greeks, Irish, Indian, Colombian, Italian, Korean, and Chinese.

Here are the other boroughs of New York:

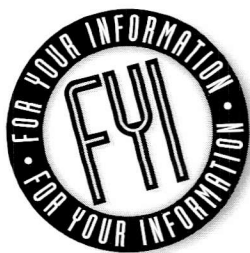
Manhattan
The Bronx
Brooklyn
Staten Island



LITERARY CONCEPT

Simile

A simile is a figure of speech that makes a comparison between two things that are actually unlike but have something in common. They express the comparison by using the word *like* or *as*. One simile in "Queens, 1963" is "By the year's end, a sprinkler waving / like a flag on our mowed lawn." Comparing the lawn to a flag brings up different connotations for the reader. The back and forth motion of the sprinkler is similar to the flapping of a flag; in addition, for many Americans a well-tended lawn and display of the flag are both signs of good citizenship. Look for other similes and see what they add to the poem's meaning.



Everything That Rises Must Converge

BY FLANNERY O'CONNOR

Background

Flannery O'Connor is one of the most original American writers of the 20th century. She wrote only four books—two novels and two collections of short stories—before her life was cut short by the disease of lupus. Violence, religion, and an unending parade of grotesque characters populate her fiction, which is firmly set in the Deep South. O'Connor's sharp, observant eye catches the dark humor and irony in human folly, but she also writes with a deep sense of compassion for humanity.

O'Connor on O'Connor (A Letter to Cecil Dawkins)

Sometimes I feel I have written myself out and it's sheer drudgery. We have just had a weekend of Caroline. She read a story that I have been working on and pointed out to me how it was completely undramatic and a million other things that I could have seen myself if I had the energy. It all goes to show that you can know something in your head and still not carry it out. I was writing the story in a hurry to see if I had a story to write. Now it'll probably take me three months to really dramatize the thing. So much of my trouble is laziness, not physical laziness so much as mental, not taking the trouble to think how a thing ought to be dramatized. I have written so many stories without thinking, that when I have to think about one, it is painful.

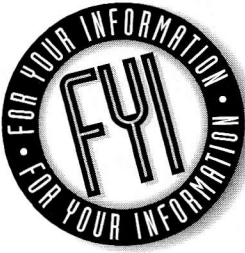


No More "To the Back of the Bus"

The events that led to the integration of public buses in the South started on December 1, 1955 in Montgomery, Alabama. A white bus driver ordered Rosa Parks, an African-American seamstress, to give her seat to a white passenger and move to the back of the bus where "colored" passengers were segregated. Parks refused and was arrested by police. Her arrest sparked a year-long bus boycott by local African-American people. The boycott finally ended bus segregation in Montgomery and quickly spread to other Southern towns and cities. It also put the national spotlight on the boycott's organizer, the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Many people saw it as the start of the civil rights movement.

Segregation Made Legal: Jim Crow Laws

Jim Crow was a stereotyped black character in an old minstrel show. The name, over time, came to be used for a series of laws that supported segregation in the South. Under Jim Crow laws, African Americans had to eat in separate parts of restaurants, drink from different water fountains, use separate bathrooms and sit in separate sections in movie theaters. In many parts of the South, Jim Crow laws were not abolished until the civil rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s.



Running from Racists

BY SUZANNE SEXIAS

Background

Skinheads, radical young people who preach and practice radical nationalism and white supremacy, are not only an American problem. There are sizable populations of skinheads in 31 countries including Canada, parts of Latin America and most of Europe. They are especially numerous in Germany, where approximately 5,000 skinheads are often aligned with Neo-Nazi groups. The targets of their hatred vary from country to country, depending on existing minorities. Britain's 1,500 skinheads verbally and physically attack Asians; German skinheads, Turks; in the Czech Republic, they attack Gypsies.

A Global Economy

Because the Houston housing market was "headed downhill" in 1984, the Longs decided to rent their home rather than sell it when they moved to Phoenix. This is a classic example of how an individual's economic situation is affected by world events.

Oil refining and the production of petrochemicals are two of Houston's chief industries. In the mid 1980's OPEC (Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries) put a glut of oil on the world market. Oil prices fell and the economy of Texas—and Houston—suffered. Consequently, the Longs would have lost money if they had tried to sell their house at that time.

Happy Birthday, Dr. King!

Beginning in 1986, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Day is formally celebrated as a national holiday in the United States on the third Monday in January. Most states now recognize this holiday. King's actual birthday is January 15.



VOCABULARY

Money Talk

This article highlights the cost of racism to the Long family. Here are some financial terms with which you may not be familiar.

mortgage	a loan from a bank used to buy a house or other real estate
fixed rate	a rate of interest that does not change but remains constant for the length of the loan or investment
401 (k)	a retirement investment plan in which money is regularly put into a tax-free account



What Is Africa to Me?— A Question of Identity

BY PAULI MURRAY

Background

Pauli Murray's trip to Ghana, where she taught law, is just one episode in this author's exciting and busy life. Born in Baltimore, she graduated from New York's Hunter College in 1933. Here are some other main events in the life of this remarkable woman:

- Arrested and jailed in Virginia for not moving to the back of the bus—15 years before Rosa Parks and the Montgomery bus boycott!
- Graduated from Howard University with a law degree
- Helped found the National Organization for Women (NOW)
- Was ordained one of the first women priests in the Episcopal Church in 1978
- Besides her book about her African experiences, she has published a book of poems and a biography of her maternal grandparents.

VOCABULARY

Slavery Words

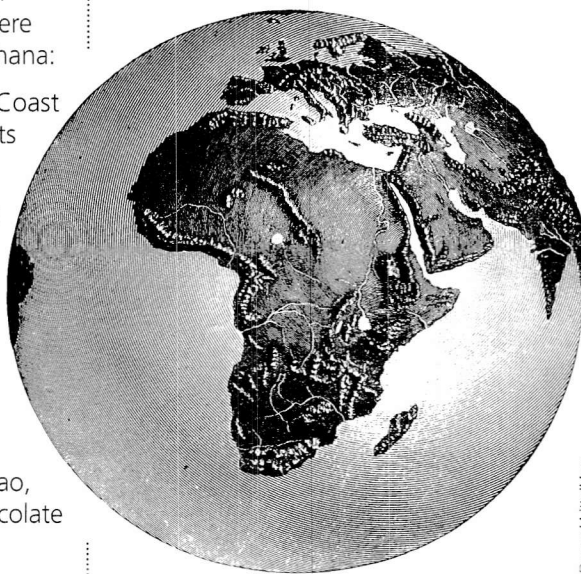
Slavery plays a major part in the history of Ghana, and writer Murray writes movingly about it, using some of these words:

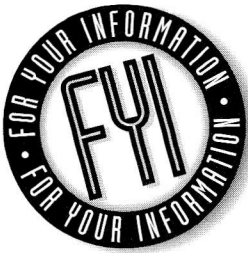
chattel	movable, personal property
cubicle	a very small room used in slave auctions
ordeal	a painful experience or trial
restitution	a payment for a loss

Golden Ghana

Ghana was one of the first African countries to regain its independence from Britain in 1957. Here are some other facts about Ghana:

- Originally called the Gold Coast because of the wealth of its exports.
- Located on the west coast of Africa.
- The Ashanti are the largest of 100 different ethnic groups.
- National dress is the colorful *kente* cloth.
- Most important crop is cacao, from which cocoa and chocolate are made.





Glossary

A R A I S I N I N T H E S U N

Act One

assimilationism*

(ə-sīm'ə-lā'shə-nīz'əm): *n.* the process of a minority group being absorbed into the majority culture *p.* 43

beseechingly* (bī-sēch'īng-lē): *adv.* in a pleading manner *p.* 54

carriage (kār'ij): *n.* the manner in which one's body is held; posture *p.* 21

clinically* (klīn'ī-kəl-lē): *adv.* objectively; coldly *p.* 17

disheveled* (dī-shēv'əld): *adj.* mussed up *p.* 7

doggedly (dō'gīd-lē): *adv.* stubbornly *p.* 21

dusky (dūs'kē): *adj.* dark-colored *p.* 6

exasperated* (īg-zās'pə-rāt'əd): *adj.* greatly irritated; angered *p.* 10

furtively* (fūr'tīv-lē): *adv.* sneakily *p.* 26

futile* (fyōōt'l): *adj.* useless *p.* 27

graft* (grāft): *n.* gaining profit through buying influence *p.* 15

graphically (grāf'ī-kəl-lē): *adv.* vividly, powerfully *p.* 15

grudgingly* (grūj'īng-lē): *adv.* with much resentment *p.* 10

indictment* (īn-dīt'mənt): *n.* an accusing or charging with a crime *p.* 7

inflection* (īn-flēk'shən): *n.* the tone or accent of a person's voice *p.* 17

insinuatingly (īn-sīn'yōō-ā'tīng-lē): *adv.* said or done in an indirect manner *p.* 47

neurotic* (nōō-rōt'īk): *n.* a person suffering from an emotional disorder *p.* 31

squinch (skwīnch): *v.* to squeeze together *p.* 47

stupor (stōō'pər): *n.* a dazed condition *p.* 6

sulk* (sūlk): *v.* to be silent and ill-tempered *p.* 11

sullen (sūl'ən): *adj.* characteristic of a mood of angry withdrawal *p.* 11

unobtrusively* (ūn'əb-trōō'sīv-lē): *adv.* quietly, without drawing attention *p.* 21

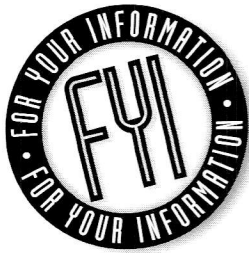
vindicate* (vīn'dī-kāt'): *v.* to clear of wrongdoing *p.* 12

PARTIAL PRONUNCIATION KEY

ă at, gas	īr dear, here	th thing, with
ā ape, day	ng sing, anger	th then, other
ā father, barn	ō odd, not	ū up, nut
ār fair, dare	ō open, road, grow	ūr fur, earn, bird, worm
ē egg, ten	ō awful, bought, horse	zh treasure, garage
ē evil, see, meal	oi coin, boy	e awake, even, pencil,
hw white, everywhere	ōō look, full	pilot, focus
ī inch, fit	ōō root, glue, through	er perform, letter
ī idle, my, tried	ou out, cow	

SOUNDS IN FOREIGN WORDS

kh German ich, auch;	œ French feu, cœur;	ū French utile, rue;
Scottish loch	German schön	German grün
n French entre, bon, fin		



Glossary (continued)

A R A I S I N I N T H E S U N

Act Two

coquettishly (kō-kět'ŷsh-lē): *adv.*
in a flirting manner *p.* 57

decisive (dĭ-sĭ'sĭv): *adj.* firm
p. 80

deplore (dĭ-plōr'): *v.* to disapprove
strongly *p.* 89

facetiousness* (fə-sē'shəs-nəs):
n. a joking manner *p.* 93

imploring (ĭm-plōr'ing): *adj.*
begging *p.* 71

incredulity* (ĭn'krĭ-dōō'lĭ-tē): *n.*
disbelief *p.* 72

ludicrous (lōō'dĭ-krəs): *adj.*
laughable *p.* 97

plaintively (plain'tĭv-lē): *adj.* sor-
rowfully *p.* 66

rebuff* (rĭ-bŭf'): *v.* to reject; push
away *p.* 75

resignation* (rĕz'ĭg-nā'shən): *n.*
passive acceptance *p.* 67

retardation (rĕ'tār-dā'shən): *n.* a
slowing down *p.* 67

scrutinize* (skrōōt'n-ĭz'): *v.* to
examine carefully *p.* 63

tentatively (tĕn'tē-tĭv-ly): *adv.*
unsurely *p.* 71

Act Three

anguished* (ăng'gwĭsht): *adj.*
showing great suffering *p.* 117

despise (dĭ-spĭz'): *v.* to hate or
show scorn *p.* 118

entrepreneur* (ĕn'trə-prə-nŭr'):
n. a person who starts a business
p. 110

epitaph (ĕp'ĭ-tăf'): *n.* an inscrip-
tion on a tomb *p.* 118

flippancy (flĭp'ən-sē): *n.* speaking
in a light or disrespectful manner
p. 109

idealist (ĭ-dē'ē-lĭst): *n.* a
dreamer *p.* 105

mirage (mĭ-răzh'): *n.* something
that seems real but is not *p.* 106

ominous* (ŏm'ə-nəs): *adj.*
threatening *p.* 103

plunder (plŭn'dər): *v.* to rob by
force *p.* 107

precariouly (prĭ-kâr'ē-əs-lē):
adv. unsteadily; unsafely *p.* 122

reflectively (rĭ-flĕk'tĭv-lē): *adv.*
with careful thought *p.* 117

reverie* (rĕv'ə-rē): *n.* a dream;
vision *p.* 121

wrought* (rôt): *v.* made; brought
into being *p.* 110

Name _____

Recalling Detail

In the first act of the play, you met the members of the Younger family and learned what each person's dream was. Fill in the chart below describing each character's dream and how the insurance money will help him or her make that dream a reality.

Walter's Dream:
How Money Will Fulfill It:
Beneatha's Dream:
How Money Will Fulfill It:
Mama's Dream:
How Money Will Fulfill It:
Ruth's Dream:
How Money Will Fulfill It:



Strategic Reading

2

ACT TWO

Name _____

Conflict

We've seen how characters in this play—Beneatha, George, Walter, Mama, the Youngers, and Mr. Lindner—encounter conflicts with each other and within themselves. In Act Two of *A Raisin in the Sun*, a number of conflicts develop and are resolved. Describe each conflict and how it is resolved in this act.

	Conflict	Resolution
Beneatha vs. George Murchinson	George's efforts to change Beneatha	
Walter vs. Mama		
The Youngers vs. Lindner and the Neighborhood Association		
Mama vs. herself		

Name _____

Making Inferences

By the end of the play, each main character has lost something but has gained in other ways. Fill in the lines below with the losses and gains after Walter has rejected Lindner's offer.

Walter has lost _____

_____, but he has gained

Beneatha has lost _____

_____, but she has gained

Mama has lost _____

_____, but she has gained

Ruth has lost _____

_____, but she has gained

Literary Concept

1

Name _____

THEME

The theme of a literary work is an insight about life or human nature that the writer presents to the reader. In *A Raisin in the Sun*, Hansberry shares some of her ideas about love, identity, dreams, values, and prejudice. Use the chart below to understand the themes she presents. Before you read, write down a real-life example of the theme. After you read, present an example from the play.

	REAL LIFE EXAMPLES	EXAMPLES FROM PLAY
	Before Reading	After Reading
1. Dreams can either save or destroy a person.		
2. Values and ideals are worth fighting for.		
3. We do not simply live for ourselves, but for those who came before and will come after us.		
4. It is never too late to start over.		

Literary Concept

1

Name _____

THEME (continued)

	REAL LIFE EXAMPLES	EXAMPLES FROM PLAY
	Before Reading	After Reading
5. Only through self-respect and self-esteem can people live with themselves.		
6. Materialism and money, in themselves, are worthless.		
7. Families can survive any catastrophe if the members love one another and share a common goal.		
8. Dreams are necessary and important, even if we don't completely realize them.		

Literary Concept

2

CHARACTERIZATION

Name _____

One of the main ways a playwright reveals a character's traits and personality in a play is through dialogue. Read each character's speech from the play and then tell what it reveals about him or her.

Act One, Scene 1

WALTER This morning, I was lookin' in the mirror and thinking about it . . . I'm thirty-five years old; I been married eleven years and I got a boy who sleeps in the living room—and all I got to give him is stories about how rich white people live . . .

RUTH (to WALTER) So you would rather *be* Mr. Arnold than be his chauffeur. So—I would *rather* be living in Buckingham Palace.

Act Two, Scene 1

BENEATHA Grass huts! See there . . . you are standing there in your splendid ignorance talking about people who were the first to smelt iron on the face of the earth! The Ashanti were performing surgical operations when the English were still tattooing themselves with blue dragons! . . .

MAMA Son—you—you understand what I done, don't you? I—I just seen my family falling apart today . . . just falling to pieces in front of my eyes . . . We couldn't of gone on like we was today. We was going backwards 'stead of forwards—talking 'bout killing babies and wishing each other was dead . . . When it gets like that in life—you just got to do something different, push on out and do something bigger . . .

Literary Concept

3

DIALOGUE

Name _____

Dialogue is the conversation between characters in a play. It is the only way, other than stage directions, that we learn about characters and their relationships. Read each bit of dialogue from the play. Then tell what it reveals about the two characters talking and their relationship towards one another.

Act One, Scene 1

WALTER You a horrible-looking chick at this hour.

BENEATHA Good morning, everybody.

WALTER How is school coming?

BENEATHA Lovely. Lovely. And you know, biology is the greatest. I dissected something that looked just like you yesterday.

Act One, Scene 2

MAMA Son—how come you talk so much 'bout money?

WALTER Because it is life, Mama!

MAMA Oh—So now it's life. Money is life. Once upon a time freedom used to be life—now it's money. I guess the world really do change . . .

WALTER No—it was always money, Mama. We just didn't know about it.

Act Two, Scene 1

RUTH Lena?

MAMA Yes, honey?

RUTH Is there—is there a whole lot of sunlight?

MAMA Yes, child, there's a whole lot of sunlight.

RUTH Well—I guess I better see 'bout Travis (To MAMA) Lord, I sure don't feel like whipping nobody today!

Literary Concept

3

DIALOGUE (continued)

Name _____

Act Two, Scene 2

RUTH She said if you don't come in tomorrow—that they are getting a new man . . .

WALTER Ain't that sad—ain't that crying sad.

RUTH She said that Mr. Arnold has had to take a cab for three days . . . Walter, you ain't been to work for three days! Where you been, Walter Lee Younger? You're going to lose your job.

WALTER That's right . . .

RUTH Oh, Walter, and with your mother working like a dog every day—

WALTER That's sad too—Everything is sad.

Act Two, Scene 3

BOBO Man . . . I didn't go to no Springfield, yesterday.

WALTER Why not?

BOBO 'Cause I didn't have no reasons to . . .

WALTER Man, what are you talking about!

BOB I'm talking about the fact that when I got to the train station yesterday morning—eight o'clock like we planned . . . Man, *Willy didn't never show up*.

WALTER Why . . . where was he . . . where is he?

BOBO That's what I'm trying to tell you . . . I don't know . . . I waited six hours . . . I called his house . . . and I waited . . . six hours . . . I waited in that train station six hours . . . That was all the extra money I had in the world . . . Man, *Willy is gone*.

Act Three

BENEATHA Be on my side for once! You saw what he just did, Mama! You saw him—down on his knees.

Wasn't it you who taught me to despise any man who would do that. Do what he's going to do.

MAMA Yes—I taught you that. Me and your daddy. But I thought I taught you something else too . . . I thought I taught you to love him.

BENEATHA Love him? There is nothing left to love.

MAMA There is *always* something left to love. And if you ain't learned that, you ain't learned nothing.

Literary Concept

4

MOOD

Name _____

Mood is the feeling or atmosphere that a writer creates for the reader. Descriptive words, setting, dialogue and character's actions contribute to the mood. Read these excerpts from the stage directions and describe the mood created in the scene.

Act One, Scene 1

Now the once loved pattern of the couch upholstery has to fight to show itself from under acres of crocheted doilies and couch covers which have themselves finally come to be more important than the upholstery. And here a table or a chair has been moved to disguise the worn places in the carpet; but the carpet has fought back by showing its weariness, with depressing uniformity, elsewhere on its surface.

Act Two, Scene 3

Before the curtain rises, RUTH's voice, a strident, dramatic church alto, cuts through the silence. It is, in the darkness, a triumphant surge, a penetrating statement of expectation: "Oh Lord, I don't feel no ways tired! Children, oh, glory hallelujah!"

As the curtain rises we see that RUTH is alone in the living room, finishing up the family's packing. It is moving day. She is nailing crates and tying cartons. BENEATHA enters, carrying a guitar case, and watches her exuberant sister-in-law.

Act Three

At curtain, there is a sullen light of gloom in the living room, gray light not unlike that which began the first scene of Act One. At left we can see WALTER within his room, alone with himself. He is stretched out on the bed, his shirt out and open, his arms under his head. He does not smoke, he does not cry out, he merely lies there, looking up at the ceiling, much as if he were alone in the world. In the living room BENEATHA sits at the table, still surrounded by the now almost ominous packing crates. She sits looking off. We feel that this is a mood struck perhaps an hour before, and it lingers now, full of the empty sound of profound disappointment. We see on a line from her brother's bedroom the sameness of their attitudes.

Beyond the Literature

SYNTHESIZING IDEAS

Culminating Writing Assignments

EXPLORATORY WRITING

1. Imagine that Walter decided to take the money offered by Lindner and sell back the house Mama bought. How would this change the ending of the play? Write a new **final scene** based on this idea.
2. Suppose that after the play ends, Beneatha marries Joseph Asagai and returns with him to his beloved Nigeria. Think about what she might experience there—as a woman and a doctor. Write a series of **diary entries** Beneatha might compose regarding her life in Africa.
3. Think about what could happen to the members of the Younger family after living in their new home for a year. Write a **description** of each character's goals and dreams at the end of this time.

RESEARCH

1. The civil rights movement forms an important background to the story of the Younger family, who are searching for an identity and dealing with prejudice. Research the civil rights movement in the United States in the 1950s and 1960s and write a **research paper** about one aspect of it—either about a major event, like the Montgomery bus boycott, or about a person like Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.
2. Research another African-American woman writer, such as Zora Neale Hurston, Toni Morrison, or Alice Walker. Write a **comparison** between the life and work of Lorraine Hansberry and that writer. Note similarities and differences in their work and how it reflects their feelings about such issues as civil rights and the African-American family.

LITERARY ANALYSIS

1. Choose one of the following themes:
The family is the most important relationship in most people's lives.
Dreams are as necessary to people as food and shelter.
It is better to fight with dignity than surrender in shame.
Then choose at least two of the main characters—Walter, Ruth, Beneatha, or Mama—and write a critical **essay** explaining how their experiences relate to the theme.
2. Write a **comparison** between *A Raisin in the Sun* and one of the related readings in this book. Compare the two pieces by concentrating on a specific literary concept such as character, conflict, or theme.
3. Arthur Miller's play *Death of a Salesman* appeared on Broadway ten years before *A Raisin in the Sun*, but there are some striking similarities between the two plays. Although the Loman family is white, they face many of the same struggles and share some of the same dreams as the Youngers. Read *Death of a Salesman*. Then write a **comparison** between the two plays, their themes, and characters.

*For writing instruction in specific modes, have students use the Writing Coach in the **CommonSpace** program.

Multimodal Activities

Setting the Scene

Have students draw or paint a **picture** of the sole setting of the play—the Younger living room. Encourage them to use the stage directions at the beginning of Act One to make their model or picture as accurate as possible. Display the finished art work for the class.

Singin' in the Sun

Raisin, the musical based on the play, was a hit on Broadway in 1973. Have interested students think of a dramatic moment in the play that they would like to set to music. Tell them to write a **song** for one character that captures that moment in music, or suggest that they write new words for an existing melody.

Broadcast News

Suggest that students imagine they are producing an investigative report for a TV news magazine on the Younger family after they moved into all-white Clybourne Park. Have them script a **skit** with students playing members of the Younger family, their new neighbors, and the investigative reporter who interviews them all. Encourage students to make a videotape of their production.

The African Way

Africa is a powerful force in the play through the character of Joseph Asagai. Have students create a **map** of Nigeria. Students may want to focus their maps in a variety of ways—emphasizing the country's population, terrain, imports and exports, or other factors.

Speaking Out

Have students write a **monologue** for their favorite character in the play and include the thoughts and feelings of that person. Set the monologue at a critical moment of the play, such as when the family learns that Walter has lost their money or when Walter tells Mr. Lindner to leave the first time. Point out that a monologue is a speech given by only one character. Students will deliver their monologues to the class and then discuss them.

Mood Music

Ask students to choose a piece of **music** that fits one main character in the play. Have them do a musical presentation for the class, playing the music on tape or CD and then explaining why this kind of music or song best expresses that character's personality.

Folk Dance

Have students learn an African **folk dance**, such as the one Beneatha does in the play, and perform it. They could also teach the dance to the rest of the class.

What Is \$10,000 Worth Today?

In 1959, the year *A Raisin in the Sun* was first produced, \$10,000 was worth much more than it is worth today. Have students look up inflation rates for each year since 1959 and use that information to calculate how much \$10,000 would be worth today. Suggest that students display their results on a **graph**.

Cross-Curricular Projects

On with the Show

Overview:

In this project, groups of students create a new scene for the play—either one that is not shown onstage (Walter bringing the insurance money to Bobo and Willy) or one that extends the action (the family moving into their new home and meeting their neighbors). Have students script the scene and then perform it before the class. They may then wish to videotape their performance and make it a permanent part of the class library.

Cross-Curricular Connections: Art, Drama, Film, Music

Suggested Procedure:

1. Divide students into small groups. Have them choose the scene they want to write. You may want to remind them that the people in the scene should stay true to their characters as presented in the play.
2. Have the groups write their scripts. Make sure they include stage directions where necessary to denote action and movement.
3. Suggest that groups consider using costumes, props, set design, and music to enrich their performance.
4. After rehearsing their scene thoroughly, the groups should perform them for the class. If students wish to videotape their scenes, they can present their tapes instead of performing live.

Teaching Tip

You may want to make sure that students do not choose the same scene or similar scenes to dramatize. Offer suggestions when necessary to prevent repetition.

The African-American Experience—Then and Now

Overview:

In this project, groups of students will compare living conditions of African Americans in the late 1950s, as experienced in *A Raisin in the Sun*, with the lifestyle and problems of African Americans today and share their findings with the class through multimedia presentations.

Cross-Curricular Connections: Economics, Sociology, Government, American History

Suggested Procedure:

1. Divide students into small groups. Each one will decide what aspect of African-American life they would like to concentrate on (housing, voting rights, jobs, social issues). Encourage students to think of topics of their own.
2. Students should research the topics they've chosen. Each member of a group should be responsible for some aspect of the research.
3. Finally, groups should decide how they want to compare contemporary African-American experience to the lives of African Americans living in the 1950s. What improvements have new laws and better economic and social conditions had on African Americans in today's society? In what ways have conditions remained the same or grown worse? Possible formats for comparison include charts, graphs, case studies, dramatic dialogues, and letters to the editor.

Teaching Tip

Instead of assigning this as group work, you can give students a list of possible topics related to African-American life and have them choose one to research individually.

Welcome to Africa!

Overview:

In this project, students will imagine that they are conducting a guided tour through Africa for African Americans such as Beneatha Younger or Pauli Murray. Their task is to create an itinerary for the tour, including countries and sights to visit, people and places to see, and activities to do.

Cross-Curricular Connections: Government, Sociology, Geography

Suggested Procedure:

1. Break the class into five groups. Each group will be responsible for creating a tour of one region of the African continent: North Africa, East Africa, West Africa, Central Africa, or Southern Africa.
2. Each group will research the region, finding and recording information about the people, history, land, animals and plants, and other important facts.
3. With this information each group will work out an itinerary for their section of the tour. Suggest that they draw a route on an enlarged map of Africa, including text and art to pinpoint stops on the tour.
4. Display the finished tour on the bulletin board. Each group can try to "sell" its tour to the class.

Teaching Tip

If you have time, you might have those students who are interested create a brochure to advertise their tour, stressing why it is meaningful for African Americans who want to rediscover their roots.

African-American Arts Week

Overview:

In this project, students will develop an agenda for a special week at school to celebrate the contribution of African-Americans such as Lorraine Hansberry to the arts. The celebration will be held in the classroom with all students participating.

Cross-Curricular Connections: Art, Music, History

Suggested Procedure:

1. Divide students into small groups. Each small group will choose an art form they want to investigate for African-American Arts Week. Choices should include art, literature, theater, and music. If there are not enough topics for the number of groups, you may decide to further subdivide topics. For example, in literature, one group can explore African-American poetry and another can examine fiction.
2. After students have done research on their topics, encourage them to think of creative ways to present their topics for your celebration. Here are examples:
 - Poetry readings from the works of Langston Hughes, Countee Cullen, Alice Walker, or Gwendolyn Brooks
 - Displaying reproductions of the work of Jean-Michael Basquiat, Martin Puryear, Jacob Lawrence, Romare Bearden, and other African-American artists
 - Performing scenes from plays by August Wilson and Lorraine Hansberry
 - Playing or performing the music of Duke Ellington, Billie Holiday, or Stevie Wonder
3. Students may want to devote one class period each day to one art form or mix them together each day. One student will be the coordinator for his or her group's activities. When the week is over, encourage students to discuss what they have learned.

Teaching Tip

If there is time, allow students to create their own art on a theme that touches the African-American experience and share their work with the class.

Suggestions for Assessment

Negotiated Rubrics

Negotiating rubrics for assessment with students allows them to know before they start an assignment what is required and how it will be judged, and gives them additional ownership of the final product. A popular method of negotiating rubrics is for the teacher and students respectively to list the qualities that the final product should contain, then compare the teacher-generated list with the student-generated list and together decide on a compromise.

Portfolio Building

Remind students that they have many choices of types of assignments to select for their portfolios. Among these are the following:

- Culminating Writing Assignments (page 48)
- Writing Prompts, found in the Discussion Starters
- Multimodal Activities (pages 49–50)
- Cross-Curricular Projects (pages 51–54)

Suggest that students use some of the following questions as criteria in selecting which pieces to include in their portfolios.

- Which shows my clearest thinking about the literature?
- Which is or could become most complete?
- Which shows a type of work not presently included in my portfolio?
- Which am I proudest of?

Remind students to reflect on the pieces they choose and to attach a note explaining why they included each and how they would evaluate it.

*For suggestions on how to assess portfolios, see **Teacher's Guide to Assessment and Portfolio Use**.*

Writing Assessment

The following can be made into formal assignments for evaluation:

- Culminating Writing Assignments (page 48)
- a written analysis of the Critic's Corner literary criticism
- fully developed Writing Prompts from the Discussion Starters

*For suggestions about assessing specific kinds of writing, see **The Guide to Writing Assessment** in the **Formal Assessment Booklet**.*

Alternative Assessment

The following can be used for performance and product assessment.

- Multimodal Activities (pages 49–50)
- Cross-Curricular Projects (pages 51–54)

Test

The test on pages 56–57 consists of essay and short-answer questions. The answer key follows.

Test

A Raisin in the Sun and Related Readings

Name _____

Date _____

Essay

Choose two of the following essay questions to answer on your own paper.
(25 points each)

1. "Once upon a time freedom used to be life—now it's money. I guess the world really do change," says Mama in Act One of *A Raisin in the Sun*. This is a play very much about the clash of generations. How are both Beneatha and Walter different from their mother in their outlook on life? What values does Mama manage to instill in them by the end of the play? How does this affect the generation gap?
2. Which character do you think changes the most in this play? Explain how that character changes and why you think that's the most significant change that occurs in the play. You may use a chart such as the one below to organize your thoughts.

Character	How He or She Changes
Walter	
Beneatha	
Mama	

3. Walter hurts his entire family when he gives all the money entrusted to him to a friend who proves to be dishonest. Do you think he redeems himself when he rejects the money of the Clybourne Park Improvement Association? Give reasons for your answer.
4. *A Raisin in the Sun* is a play about an African-American family in Chicago. Yet, many critics believe that what makes it an enduring work of art is that it is about universal values that touch all people, regardless of color and class. Do you agree with this evaluation? Give reasons for your opinion.
5. Choose one of the following pairs to compare and contrast:
 - a. Walter Lee Younger to Elijah in "The Beach Umbrella"
 - b. Beneatha to Julian in "Everything That Rises Must Converge"
 - c. The Younger family to the Long family in "Running from Racists"

Consider each person's relationship to other family members. How do their dreams change and shape them?

Test (continued)

A Raisin in the Sun and Related Readings

Short Answer

On your paper, write a short answer for each question below and give a reason for your answer. (5 points each)

1. What does the insurance money represent to Mama?
2. Think of an adjective that describes Walter's character and give a reason for your choice.
3. Which suitor in your opinion is a better match for Beneatha—George Murchison or Joseph Asagai? Explain your answer.
4. What is Mama's motivation for buying the house?
5. Why do you think Ruth and Walter have grown apart?
6. Name an idea that Mama's plant represents. Explain your answer.
7. Which character do you think is most entitled to the insurance money? Why?
8. Why do you think Walter reconsiders Lindner's offer?
9. How does Walter finally, in Mama's words, "come into his manhood"?
10. How does the play *A Raisin in the Sun* relate to the Hughes poem from which the title comes?

Test Answer Key

A Raisin in the Sun and Related Readings

Essay

Answers to essay questions will vary, but opinions should be stated clearly and supported by details from the text. Suggestions for points to look for are given below.

1. Walter believes that money is how people get respect and love in the world; he is a materialist. Beneatha, who has gone to college, is the intellectual who rejects her mother's strong religious beliefs. In the end, Mama instills into Beneatha the value of love for family even after what Walter has done to them. She teaches Walter to live up to his father's legacy and not to sacrifice his dignity to money and prejudice.
2. Some students may say Walter changes the most. They might say he goes from being self-centered and greedy to taking a stand and preserving his and his family's self-respect. Some may say Mama, because her eyes are opened to the various types of strengths and weaknesses within her children. Some may say Beneatha, because she grows up from being a child flitting from one activity to another, to an adult with a mission.
3. Those students who think Walter vindicated himself at the end might note that he renewed his mother's faith in him and stood up courageously to prejudice. He also expressed the legacy of his father, whose life provided them with this opportunity and gave Travis a positive role model to look up to and emulate. Others might see Walter's stand as noble but one that was originally brought about by his own greed and anger after Willy conned him out of the money. Because of Walter's thoughtlessness, the family will have to work twice as hard to keep their new house, and Beneatha will have a harder time getting into medical school.
4. Students who agree might say that one universal theme deals with a family struggling to succeed in a cold, materialistic world cut off from tradition, faith, and enduring values. Also, the idea of "selling out" to make money is one most people today can identify with. The circumstances may be different, but the basic situation is a common one. The themes of sibling rivalry, arguing couples, and parent / child rifts are also universal.
5. a. Walter and Elijah both have dreams of adventure and fortune, although Elijah's are more modest than Walter's. Elijah wants to be the big man on the beach while Walter wants to be a big player in Chicago's business world. Both betray family members in trying to realize their dreams—Walter, his mother, and Elijah, his son. Elijah grows disillusioned with his dream and settles for the higher earning power of a factory job, while Walter rises above his shortcomings and becomes a bigger man in the process.
b. Beneatha and Julian are both college-educated young people who believe that they are superior to their mothers. They both share a certain naïveté and lack of real experience in life. Beneatha, however, is not as self-deluded as Julian, whose "love" of African Americans is largely a reaction against his mother's prejudice against them. Only after his mother is stricken does Julian realize his mistake, a fate that Beneatha does not face.

Test Answer Key

A Raisin in the Sun and Related Readings

- c. The Youngers and the Longs are both hardworking and loving African-American families who face racism in their neighborhoods. The Longs, who are far better off financially, are able to sell their house and move to another neighborhood to escape danger. The Youngers, however, plunge into that same situation with courage, willing to face the hatemongers for their share of the "American dream." Students may express indignation that, although these two families are separated by more than 30 years, their similar predicaments shows how little race relations have improved, despite great strides in the struggle for civil rights.

Short Answer

Answers will vary but should reflect the following ideas.

1. It represents her husband's flesh and blood and is his last legacy to his family, or it represents the last chance to prevent her family from tearing itself apart.
2. Choices might include *intense*, *moody*, *frustrated*, *discontent*, or other adjectives that show Walter's desire to better himself in the world. Students should explain their choice.
3. Many students will say Asagai is a better match because he is a caring person who loves his country unselfishly, cares more about people than money, and understands Beneatha. Some may choose George because he can take her out of poverty.
4. The house is something she can share with all her family. It is also the fulfillment of the dream she shared with her husband.
5. Some students will say that Ruth doesn't share his dream of getting rich quick or that Walter doesn't appreciate Ruth's need for a more conventional approach to life. Other students may mention poor communication or lack of compromise.
6. The plant might represent perseverance in the face of adversity, or it might represent the garden she has never had.
7. Some students will say Beneatha because she is pursuing her dream through education; some will say Mama because she has suffered and lost her husband; some will say Walter because he wants a shot at becoming his own boss.
8. After Walter loses the money, he is ashamed and angry, and wants to get some of it back by being as ruthless as Willy.
9. Walter rejects losing his honor and dignity for money and reaffirms his father's example while setting a good example for his son.
10. As in the poem, all the major characters have "dreams deferred." Also, Walter does "explode." Unlike the poem, the dreams are fulfilled through the characters' own efforts.

Additional Resources

Other Works by Lorraine Hansberry

The Sign in Sidney Brustein's Window. 1965

A play about an idealistic Jewish intellectual and his friends.

To Be Young, Gifted and Black: Lorraine Hansberry in Her Own Words. 1969

A collection of prose, scenes of plays, and other miscellaneous writings adapted by Hansberry's husband and literary executor.

Les Blancs: The Collected Last Plays of Lorraine Hansberry. 1983

Three plays, including the title one about revolution in Africa and her unproduced TV play about slavery, *The Drinking Gourd*.

FICTION AND DRAMA

Arnow, Harriet. *The Dollmaker*. New York: Avon, 1976. This novel, about a Kentucky woman who dreams of buying her own farm, recounts her struggles when her family is uprooted and moves to Detroit. **(average)**

Haley, Alex. *Roots: The Saga of an American Family*. New York: Doubleday, 1976. This is a partially fictionalized story of Haley's family—from Africa to America and from slavery to freedom. **(average)**

Marshall, Paule. *Brown Girl, Brownstones*. New York: Feminist Press, 1981. The coming-of-age story of the daughter of immigrants from Barbados, caught between her mother's desire to buy a house and her father's desire to return to his homeland. **(average)**

Miller, Arthur. *Death of a Salesman*. New York: Bantam, 1951. A classic American play about the American dream and how it destroys a family. **(average)**

Wright, Richard. *Native Son*. New York: Harper, 1940. The first novel by an African American to win widespread critical acclaim. It is the grim story of a young African-American man in Chicago who is doomed by fate, his own misguided fears, and a racist society. **(challenge)**

POETRY

Brooks, Gwendolyn. *A Street in Bronzeville*. New York: Harper, 1976. A collection of poems by this distinguished poet, whose work is both social and personal and is noted for its use of street language and jazz rhythms. **(average)**

Hughes, Langston. *Selected Poems of Langston Hughes*. NY: Random House, 1974. This rich sampling of Hughes's poetry includes "Harlem," the poem from which Hansberry took the title of *Raisin in the Sun*. **(average)**

Walker, Alice. "For My Sister Molly in the Fifties." Poem from *Revolutionary Petunias and Other Poems*. New York: Harcourt, 1971. A compelling poem about a young African-American woman, similar to Beneatha, growing up in the 1950s. **(average)**

NONFICTION

Baldwin, James. *The Price of the Ticket: Collected Nonfiction 1948–1985*. New York: St. Martin's, 1985. Baldwin's insightful collections of essays about race, literature, and other matters in one volume. **(challenge)**

Carter, Steven R. *Hansberry's Drama: Commitment and Complexity*. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1991. A thorough and comprehensive examination of all Hansberry's theater work, both published and unpublished. **(challenge)**

Cheney, Anne. *Lorraine Hansberry*. Boston: Twayne, 1984. A critical study of her life and work. **(average)**

Clarke, Althone G. "Crossing a Boundary." *Newsweek*, May 13, 1991. A middle-class African-American man jogs through an all-white neighborhood and is made to feel like an outsider. **(average)**

Lemann, Nicholas. *The Promised Land*. New York: McKay, 1992. This best-selling book explores the migration of African Americans from the South to the North and Midwest. The basis for the Discovery/BBC documentary. **(average)**

Murray, Pauli. *Proud Shoes: The Story of an American Family*. New York: Harper, 1978. The biography of the author's extraordinary grandparents, who helped establish schools for African-Americans in Virginia and North Carolina after the Civil War. **(average)**

Otfinoski, Steven. *Great Black Writers*. New York: Facts on File, 1994. A study of the lives and works of ten African-American writers, including Lorraine Hansberry. For young adults. **(average)**

Terkel, Studs. *Race*. New York: New Press, 1992. This book examines, from a variety of perspectives, how Americans view this national obsession. **(average)**

Wright, Richard. *Black Boy*. New York: Harper, 1966, © 1945. Wright's harrowing autobiography about growing up African-American in the racist South in the early decades of this century. **(challenge)**

MULTIMEDIA

A Raisin in the Sun. Videorecording. 128 min. Burbank, CA: RCA/Columbia Pictures Home Video, 1961. Directed by Daniel Petrie. Starring Sidney Poitier, Claudia McNeil, Ruby Dee, Diana Sands, Ivan Dixon, and Louis Gossett, Jr. The film adaptation of Hansberry's play written by herself. **(videocassette)**

Black Studies. CD-ROM. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1995. Prepared by the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture and The New York Public Library. **(compact disc)**

Civil Rights Series. Videorecording. 60 min. Chicago: Encyclopedia Britannica Education Corporation, 1990. Produced by Central City Productions. The life and work of Martin Luther King, Jr., as seen through historical footage and interviews. **(videocassette)**

Eyes on the Prize. Videorecording. 360 min. New York: PBS Video, 1987. The most comprehensive television documentary ever made on the civil rights movement in America. **(videocassette)**

Langston Hughes. Videorecording. 60 min. New York: New York Center for Visual History, 1988. Distributed by Mystic Fire Video. This film includes Hughes reading his work and scenes of his travels in Africa, Europe, Russia, and the U.S. Includes commentary by James Baldwin, Gwendolyn Brooks, and others. **(videocassette)**

Native Son. Videorecording. Stamford, CT: Vestron Video, 1986, video release, 1987. 111 min. Directed by Jerrold Freedman. Starring Geraldine Page, Oprah Winfrey, John Karley, Matt Dillon, Elizabeth McGovern, Carroll Baker, and Victor Love. A recent film version of the book. **(videocassette)**

Racism in America. Videorecording. 26 min. Princeton, NJ: Films for the Humanities and Services, no date. Examines the roots of racism and what can be done to end it. **(videocassette)**

The Promised Land. Videorecording. 5-part series, 60 min. each, broken into 3 cassettes. Co-produced by Discovery Productions and BBC, 1995. Distributed by PBS Video. This critically acclaimed documentary, based on Nicholas Lemann's best-selling book, tells the story of the 5 million African Americans who migrated from the deep South to the "Promised Land" of the North from the 1930s to the 1970s. Focuses on life in the Mississippi delta, the launch point of migration, and Chicago, the final destination for many. **(videocassette)**

The following books are available as
Literature Connections from McDougal Littell.

RECOMMENDED FOR MIDDLE SCHOOL

Across Five Aprils
Irene Hunt

The Call of the Wild**
Jack London

The Clay Marble
Minfong Ho

The Contender
Robert Lipsyte

The Diary of Anne Frank*
Frances Goodrich & Albert Hackett

Dogsong
Gary Paulsen

Dragonwings
Laurence Yep

The Giver
Lois Lowry

The Glory Field
Walter Dean Myers

The House of Dies Drear
Virginia Hamilton

I, Juan de Pareja
Elizabeth Borton de Treviño

Johnny Tremain
Esther Forbes

Maniac Magee
Jerry Spinelli

Nothing but the Truth
Avi

***Roll of Thunder,
Hear My Cry*****
Mildred D. Taylor

***So Far from the
Bamboo Grove***
Yoko Kawashima Watkins

Tuck Everlasting**
Natalie Babbitt

Where the Red Fern Grows
Wilson Rawls

***The Witch of Blackbird
Pond***
Elizabeth George Speare

A Wrinkle in Time
Madeleine L'Engle

RECOMMENDED FOR HIGH SCHOOL

***The Adventures of
Huckleberry Finn*****
Mark Twain

***... And the Earth Did Not
Devour Him***
Tomás Rivera

Animal Farm
George Orwell

The Crucible
Arthur Miller

Ethan Frome
Edith Wharton

Fallen Angels
Walter Dean Myers

The Friends
Rosa Guy

Hamlet
William Shakespeare

Jane Eyre**
Charlotte Brontë

Julius Caesar
William Shakespeare

Macbeth
William Shakespeare

***A Midsummer
Night's Dream***
William Shakespeare

My Ántonia
Willa Cather

Nervous Conditions
Tsitsi Dangarembga

Picture Bride
Yoshiko Uchida

***A Place Where the Sea
Remembers***
Sandra Benítez

Pygmalion
Bernard Shaw

A Raisin in the Sun
Lorraine Hansberry

The Scarlet Letter
Nathaniel Hawthorne

A Tale of Two Cities**
Charles Dickens

Things Fall Apart
Chinua Achebe

***To Kill a Mockingbird:
The Screenplay***
Horton Foote

***The Tragedy of
Romeo and Juliet*****
William Shakespeare

The Underdogs
Mariano Azuela

West with the Night
Beryl Markham

When Rain Clouds Gather
Bessie Head

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