



2016-17

HOT SEASON *for* YOUNG PEOPLE

Teacher Guidebook



Nashville Repertory Theatre
A RAISIN IN THE SUN

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From our Season Sponsor



For over 130 years Regions has been proud to be a part of the Middle Tennessee community, growing and thriving as our area has. From the opening of our doors on September 1, 1883, we have committed to this community and our customers.

One area that we are strongly committed to is the education of our students. We are proud to support TPAC's Humanities Outreach in Tennessee Program. What an important sponsorship this is – reaching over 25,000 students and teachers – some students would never see a performing arts production without this program. Regions continues to reinforce its commitment to the communities it serves and in addition to supporting programs such as HOT, we have close to 200 associates teaching financial literacy in classrooms this year.

Thank you, teachers, for giving your students this wonderful opportunity. They will certainly enjoy the experience. You are creating memories of a lifetime, and Regions is proud to be able to help make this opportunity possible.

Jim Schmitz
Executive Vice President, Area Executive
Middle Tennessee Area

WELCOME !N *to the* ARTS



**2016-2017
HOT Season
for Young People**

Dear Teachers~

We are so pleased you will be attending Nashville Repertory Theatre's production of *A Raisin in the Sun*. Director René D. Copeland describes Lorraine Hansberry's ground-breaking play as both specific and universal. The coexistence and interplay of both conditions make it an American classic.

This guidebook provides an awareness of context and historical conditions that will deepen student understanding of the play's impact and just how revolutionary it was for its time. We see an African American family struggle with each other as they fight for their own piece of the American Dream against the backdrop of the late 1950s. Included are explorations and activities that will help your students get inside the situations and the story and connect their own knowledge to a different perspective.

We hope your students will be inspired by the journey of the Youngers and embrace their own dreams and aspirations, along with the hard work required to achieve them.

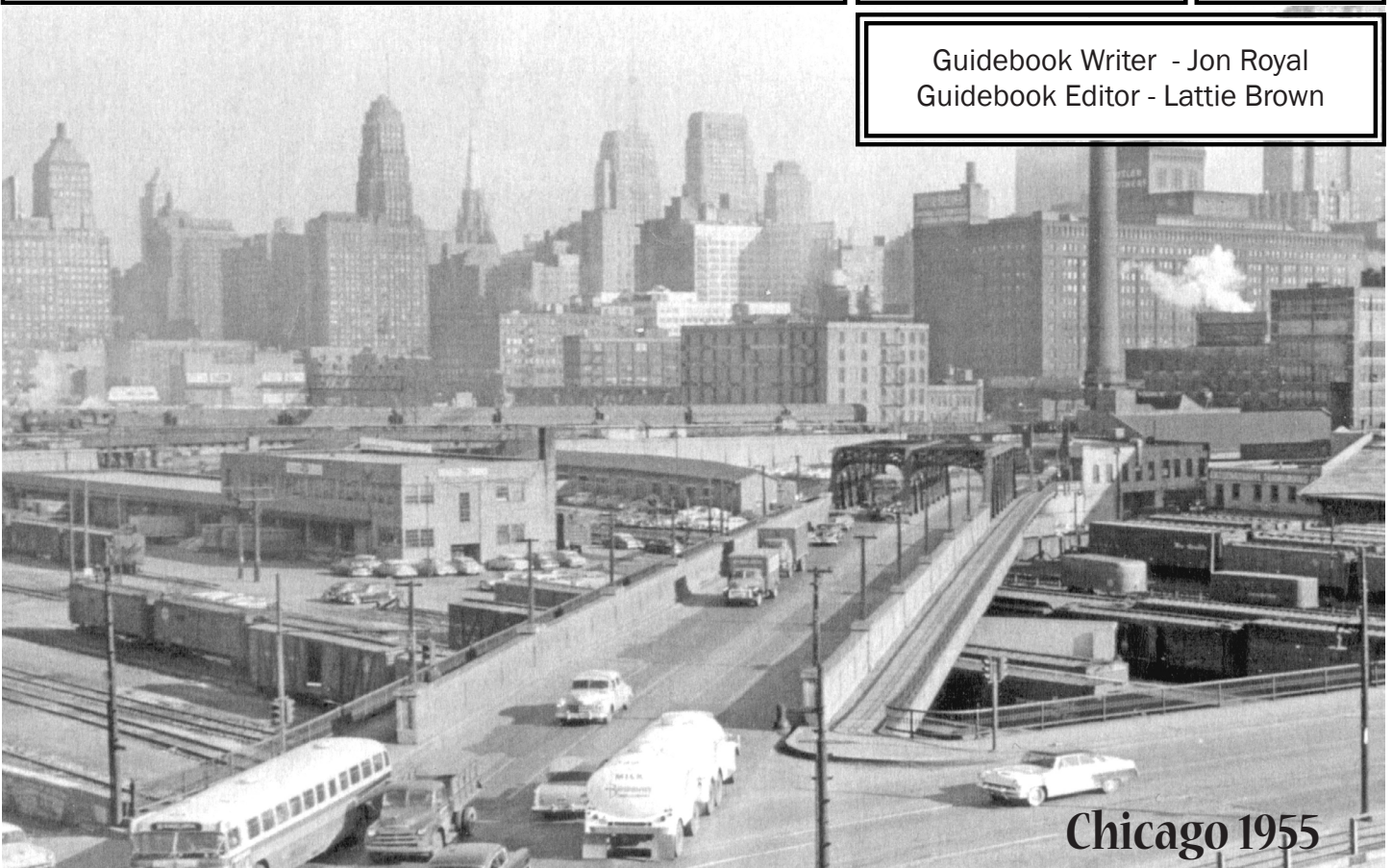
Enjoy the show!!

TPAC Education

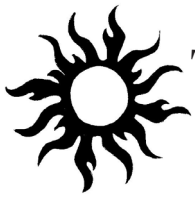
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Guidebook Writer - Jon Royal
Guidebook Editor - Lattie Brown



Chicago 1955



Lorraine Hansberry was born in Chicago, the daughter of a prosperous real estate broker. When she was eight years old, her family purchased a home in a middle class white section of Chicago where they were threatened and harassed by hostile neighbors. She and her sister narrowly escaped serious injury when a brick was thrown through their window. This experience, and her deep concern with the struggles of her people, served in part as impetus for *A Raisin in the Sun*.



With thanks to the Lorraine Hansberry Literary Trust

She attended segregated schools on Chicago's Southside where she made friends with students whose families were less fortunate than hers. After graduation from Englewood High School in 1948, she attended the University of Wisconsin to study art and stage design. After completing her sophomore year she left college and moved to New York, becoming active with little theatre groups. She met and married Robert Nemiroff, who encouraged her to pursue her interest in playwriting.

In 1963 she was diagnosed as having cancer and spent the next two years in and out of hospitals. She died on January 12, 1965. Nemiroff compiled fragments from her plays, stories and letters into a biographical play celebrating her life and spirit which he called, *To Be Young Gifted and Black*.

Lorraine Hansberry originally titled her play, *The Crystal Stair* from a different Langston Hughes poem, "Mother to Son". The beginning line reads "Well, son, I'll tell you: Life for me ain't been no crystal stair."

"Mother to Son" addresses hardship and perseverance, which is certainly present in the play, but as Hansberry continued writing, the theme of what to do with dreams became stronger, and she sought out another Langston Hughes work with a powerful line for her new title, *A Raisin in the Sun*.

Harlem

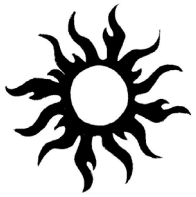
By Langston Hughes

What happens to a dream deferred?
Does it dry up
Like a raisin in the sun?
Or fester like a sore—
And then run?
Does it stink like rotten meat?
Or crust and sugar over—
Like a syrupy sweet?

Maybe it just sags
Like a heavy load.

Or does it explode?

With thanks to
The Estate of Langston Hughes



Disturbed by the depiction of African Americans in Broadway plays and musicals, Lorraine Hansberry decided to counter these stereotypes by writing her own play. Her intent was to write a social drama about believable characters who happen to be Black, rather than a “Negro play.” She also wanted to create a work of art. She accomplished her goals with her first and most famous play, *A Raisin In the Sun*. The piece was written during the turbulent fifties when the Civil Rights Movement was well under way.

The Broadway opening was on March 11th, 1959, where it ran for 530 performances. It is one of the most performed plays by an African American playwright. In less than a quarter of a century it became an American classic. The play is a landmark drama for a number of reasons:

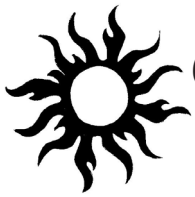
- It was the first play written by an African American woman to be produced on Broadway.
- Lorraine Hansberry became the first African American and the youngest to win the New York Drama Critics Award.
- Lloyd Richards, the director was the first African American to direct a Broadway show in over fifty years.
- Large numbers of whites were introduced to modern African American characters and life for the first time through Hansberry’s play, which paved the way for the wider acceptance of other works by Black playwrights who followed, such as Lonne Elder, Charles Fuller, Suzan Lori-Parks, Lynne Nottage, and August Wilson.
- There were numerous cuts made in the original production, some having to do with the plot and others with characters. The original ending, for example, was changed from one in which the Youngers waited in their new home for their neighbors to attack it, to the present, more hopeful ending.

Short Synopsis

A Raisin in the Sun is a play about dreams; what it means to dream big, to lose faith in your dreams, and to discover new dreams. It is also a story about family.

We meet the Younger family the day before they are getting a \$10,000 insurance check from the death of the father, Walter Younger. We watch as different members of the family have different ideas of how to use the money: Mama wants to buy a house with a little garden in the back, Walter Lee Younger (their son) wants to invest in a liquor store, Ruth (Walter Lee’s wife) wants a house with some space and a nice kitchen, and Beneatha (Walter Lee’s sister) wants to go to medical school.

Tensions increase as each member of the family tries to get their own way, eventually threatening to break apart their foundation completely. The stakes continue to climb as questions about identity, class, value, race and love come to the fore to influence the decision, and outsiders make it impossible to forget aspects of the world that the Younger family cannot seem to escape.



Characters and Setting

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A Raisin in the Sun takes place during the late 1950s. It is set in the crowded apartment of an African-American family, the Youngers, in the slums of Chicago's Southside.

In her stage directions, Lorraine Hansberry describes the apartment furniture as tired and worn. She states that "weariness has, in fact, won this room." But there is still a great deal of pride, love, and perseverance in the household, symbolized in part by Mama's houseplant, continuing to endure despite a lack of sunlight and good soil.



Original Broadway Cast: Claudia McNeil as Lena, Sydney Poitier as Walter Lee, and Diana Sands as Beneatha

Characters

Walter Lee Younger ~ A 35-year-old chauffeur with married to Ruth with a son living in a small apartment with his mother and sister in the South Side of Chicago

Lena Younger (Mama) ~ The 60-something mother of Walter and Beneatha who has recently lost her husband Walter Sr., and will be the recipient of a \$10,000 life insurance check

Beneatha Younger ~ Walter's 20-year-old sister, a college student with modern ideas and philosophies on race, class, and religion

Ruth Younger ~ Walter's wife and Travis' mother. In her early thirties, Ruth is exceptionally pretty, but is aging before her time because of her impoverished surroundings (Ruth was played by Ruby Dee in the original Broadway production.)

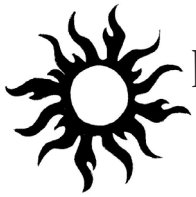
Travis Younger ~ Walter and Ruth's 10 year-old son

Joseph Asagai ~ A Nigerian college student interested in Beneatha

George Murchison ~ Beneatha's classmate that she has dated a bit, from a wealthy black family

Karl Lindner ~ A white, middle-aged representative from the Clybourne Park Improvement Society

Bobo ~ A fellow investor in the liquor business, along with Willy and Walter



Nashville Repertory Theatre Artistic Director and stage director of *A Raisin in the Sun*, René D. Copeland is interviewed by TPAC teaching artist and guidebook author Jon Royal.

Jon: Why is it so important to be telling the story of *A Raisin in the Sun*, right now, in our world?

René: I think it's really important in our world right now that we tell stories that make you see things through other people's eyes - stories that give you some sense of what it feels like to stand in someone else's shoes, and perhaps, for this play, if you happen to be white, that help you see something through different cultural eyes.



What this black family is going through in the 1950s has many parallels to what's going on in our cultural and racial conversations today. This story has to do with systematic racism that continues to thrive relative to issues around housing: public housing, home ownership, access to neighborhoods, financing, and insurance. We have not solved that problem. I think it's very important right now, that at the very least, we are telling stories that make people think about what it must feel like to go through that unfair situation, to exercise our empathy muscles. In this play, in particular, we need our empathy muscles in addressing the "other" - someone who is not exactly like you, perhaps someone who is a different race, a different socio-economic strata, or in this case, someone from a different decade.

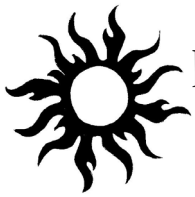
Yet the story that the characters experience is still a core human experience related to our own; that's what makes this play great. It has the universal themes: what does it mean to be a successful person, and what does it mean to want to advance beyond where you are, so that your children will have a better life than you. What does it mean to your family, when you take risks to try to make those things happen, and how do family bonds hold up around those things? What does it mean to be a black family trying to move to a point where the next generation has it better off, than the previous one? What does it mean to be a black man, and have success in our culture. What do you aspire to? What does success look like?

This play is such a brilliant exploration of those questions in a very accessible way. It's the kind of story that we should all be looking at with the idea that it can make you stop for a second, and think about what you are, and how you live your life. The more we can see through other people's eyes, especially in our culture today, the better chance we have to fight the kind of extreme division that we have going on right now. If you can't put yourself in the shoes of other people, then we're in deep trouble.

Jon: How does this playwright inspire you, as an artist?

René: Her life story is inspiring. Just knowing that there was actually an incident in her personal life, that informed the whole premise of a black family moving to a white neighborhood, and what [the people of the neighborhood's] response was. She lived that.

(Continued on page 6)



Also, she was raised with this respect and understanding for the connection between intellectualism, social activism, and art. I love that crossroads. It's a smart, educated ability to have critical and rational thinking, along with applying that thinking to social justice issues that are important to you. If you're a genius the way Lorraine Hansberry is, you find a way to use art to combine those things, and not make it about an intellectual exercise at all, but an experience of the heart.

Who knows what would might have happened if she had managed to live her whole life? She died so criminally young. Being a woman, doing what she did, in the late fifties, is inspiring - plus being a black woman - and all that she accomplished against the severe cultural obstacles at that time. She's quite an icon for me.

Jon: Can you talk to me about the function of Mr. Karl Lindner, in this piece? He's the only white person that audiences will see. Can you talk a little about who he is, as a human being?

René: One of the brilliant things about the play, frankly, is the way Karl Lindner written, and the person he's presented to be, because Karl is just a nice guy. He's a nice, white guy. He's one of those people who's a leader in his community, he's probably a leader in his church, a good father, and a good husband. Yet, when he comes into the Younger's household, the things that come out of his mouth are not good. Heard through the ears of the family receiving them, the characters we are connecting to, causes anyone sitting in the audience watching the play to ask, "Oh man, do you not realize what you're saying?"

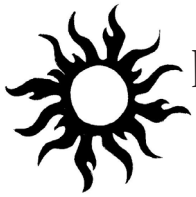
As the artist telling this story, it's important for me to get white audience members to recognize that you can be a nice person and still be a part of the core difficulty. You can still be a part of the system that is institutionalized racism, even without being someone who burns crosses, or yells nasty words at people. Lindner's just trying to help. A lot of actions that are racist come from a place of, "I'm just trying to help."

The function of Lindner in the story is important, because it gives us insight into that quiet, institutionalized point of view that was trying to keep the Youngers from moving to a white neighborhood. The fact is that it's not the result of overt rage, but a dispassionate intellectual choice instead, without having any concept of the socio-economic impact of not having all doors open to all people, of all races. I think that many stories that help us understand the racist implications of our relationships, need characters like Lindner.

Jon: I want to ask about the end of this play. My research tells me that the ending that we read in the script, is the ending that she wrote, specifically for Broadway. I read that the original ending implies that the family is in danger. What do you feel about the end of the play, as it appears now?

René: I'm fascinated to read Lorraine Hansberry's response to some of the positive criticism she received. When *A Raisin in the Sun* came out on Broadway, it was embraced as this spectacular play, and a lot of the reviewers talked about the happy ending. Also, they talked about the fact that it doesn't matter if you're black or white, people have the same kinds of family dynamics and stresses, that we all relate to as humans, and that it's not about race.

(Continued on page 7)



As grateful as she was for the positive response to the play, universality was never her sole intention, though it was an important result. The play actually is first about a black family specifically, and she didn't want people to forget the circumstances into which that family was about to put themselves. In fact, as far as Hansberry was concerned, because of the neighborhood that they're moving into, the Youngers are actually headed for some very difficult times.

I believe she wrote an ending for the screenplay that didn't get filmed, because they decided it was too dark. I never found any version of the play that has another ending, but I am interested in striking a tone with the ending that is not an easy happy ever after. I think that they're excited to go, and that they've found strength as a family to move forward, but I want to be as clear as I can, in telling the story, that they're stepping out into a big unknown. Their departure from the apartment coincides with their joy at finding their connection as a family. There's great joy in that re-connection, so at the end they're really basking in that. It's a difficult tone to hit, because you don't want to overdo and make the final scene too saccharin. It has way more texture and can't be captured by saying, "Oh, it's a happy ending." So, I'll be trying to figure that out in rehearsal, with the help of the actors.

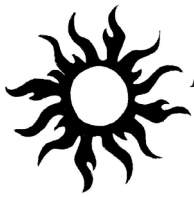
The final image is Mama coming back in to get her houseplant. I think the secret, in a nonverbal sense, as to what she might be facing is in that action. I'm very interested in that moment, from a director's point of view. Knowing that Lorraine felt strongly about the unknown future really pushes me to explore it as much as I can.

Jon: What do you hope that audience members will do, after they've seen this production, and been inspired by it?

René: I hope that anyone that experiences this play will be one step further down the path of realizing how interconnected we all are, as people; that there are actually difficulties that our culture has, relative to race; and that we have an obligation to pay better attention. In other words, if you see this play and feel some empathy that you didn't expect to feel, then what are you gonna do with that? Have you ever heard that church saying, "If one person was saved, then the whole service was worth it"?

After watching this play, if there's one moment in some audience member's life, in which they realize, in a way they haven't thought of before, that they're about to participate in something that's racist, I would be very happy. I don't think this play preaches any sort of overtly social political action. I think it preaches opening your own awareness to who you are, and what role you play culturally and in your family dynamic, and how does that role relate to the choices you make and the way you live your life. Will watching the play make you more open to the signs of injustice that you may have just blown off before, but now you're actually going to pay attention to, instead of ignoring or being complicit in them?

It's one of those tallies of how successful this play will be, that I won't know about until I get to heaven. I'm involved in a business, where the sole purpose is to make people **better people**. That's what we do. I'm really happy to be involved with a project that has this specific focus, this one way to become better by opening our hearts and our minds to the experiences of people that are, in whatever way, the "other".



Economic Comparisons - What can you do with \$10,000?

Students may not relate to the central conflict in *A Raisin in the Sun* over what to do with the life-changing \$10,000 dollars unless they understand that much money in today's terms. Could that amount of money really change the lives of the Youngers? Challenge students to imagine the spending power of \$10,000 dollars in today's terms.

Look at 1955 spending power and its 2017 equivalent, according to Consumer Price Index calculators.

$$\begin{aligned} [1955] \text{ \$1.00 } &= \text{ \$9.06 [2017] } \\ [1955] \text{ \$10,000 } &= \text{ \$90,611.57 [2017] } \end{aligned}$$

That's an increase of over 900%, but the dollar-value comparison isn't enough to truly get the picture of what was possible back then with \$10,000 dollars. Costs have changed unevenly, and some dreams would not be financially possible today in the way they were in 1955.

Beneatha's Dream - Medical School

Looking at state schools that have posted archived historic medical school tuition records on-line, the increase for tuition alone (without of the many additional fees or housing) is almost 6,750%.

Compare University of Pennsylvania tuition for a year:

$$[1955] \text{ \$800 } = \text{ \$54.036 [2017] }$$

Medical school was completely affordable for \$10,000 with plenty left over. Equivalent dollars today would not even buy two years of tuition alone without fees, housing, and other expenses.

Mama's Dream - a house

Obviously, a true comparison of property values would require all the price-affecting details of the home including neighborhood, square footage, amenities, etc. Encourage your class to infer and imagine comparative values from the following information:

According to public records, the house Lorraine Hansberry's father purchased at 6140 South Rhodes Avenue was last sold in 2006 for \$285,000 with 3,918 square feet. (Though it is designated a Chicago Historic Landmark, the house is privately owned.) Properties in that area were selling for an average of \$50,000 in 1990. Records could not be found for the Hansberry sale in 1937 or for our comparison date range in the 1950s. The argument for Lena Younger being able to buy a house with \$10,000 seems validated.

Old newspaper ads from the 1950s (at www.thepeoplehistory.com) with a three-bedroom house (like 6140 South Rhodes with 3,918 sq.ft.) show the following text and price:

1951 Chicago, IL \$14,500

6 room brick home-built by one of Chicago's best builders modern kitchen and gas heat



Lorraine Hansberry House in Chicago

Compare this unknown neighborhood listing with a current 2017 property listed on realtor.com a few blocks away from the Lorraine Hansberry house on S.Greenwood Avenue for \$430,000 (2,605 sq.ft.) or even a property further over in the Southside on S.Yale listed at \$212,709 (3,720 sq.ft.)



Additional Background - Derivative Works

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A Raisin in The Sun has inspired multiple generations of artists of varying ethnicities. Below are some examples of works of art that the play has inspired. In fact, *Clybourne Park* and *Beneatha's Place* have been presented in series with Hansberry's play, and called "The Raisin Cycle".

RAISIN the Musical

In 1973, a musical version of *A Raisin In the Sun* opened on Broadway. Lorraine Hansberry's widower, Robert Nemiroff, collaborated to write the book with Charlotte Zaltzberg. Judd Woldin composed the music, while Robert Brittan wrote the lyrics. This fourteen-song piece follows the storyline of its source material. In a musical, though, as opposed to a straight play, when the emotional content becomes elevated, the characters are compelled to communicate via song. The show ran on Broadway for over 800 performances, and won the 1974 Tony Award for Best Musical, and the 1975 Grammy for Best Score from an Original Cast Show Album.

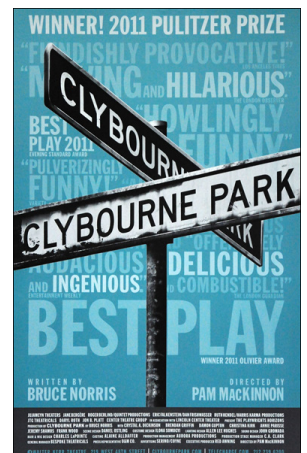


The Colored Museum - "The Last Mama On the Couch Play"

Producer/director/writer George C Wolfe's 1986 play, *The Colored Museum* featured 11 small scenes, or "exhibits", about how black people in this culture have internalized the particular madness brought on by being stolen from their homeland and enslaved. In one his vignettes entitled "The Last Mama on the Couch Play", Wolfe parodies elements of black theatre, and focuses on the most well known and successful black play about the African American experience; Lorraine Hansberry's *A Raisin In The Sun*. Wolfe uses comedy to examine Walter Lee's ongoing struggles with manhood and authority, Mama's religious faith, and the Younger Family dynamic.

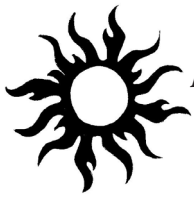
Clybourne Park

Playwright Bruce Norris' play won the Pulitzer Prize for Drama in 2011 and the Tony Award for Best Play in 2012. During the events of *A Raisin In the Sun*, Lena Younger puts a down payment on a house in an all white Chicago suburb, for which Norris's play is titled. All of the action of Norris's play takes place in this residence. The first act takes place in 1959, where we meet the family that is selling to the Youngers and discover the circumstances of their move. The character of Karl Lindner appears in this play in the first act, creating an even closer link to Hansberry's play. The second act takes place fifty years later in 2009. The neighborhood has become all black, and now a white family is attempting to purchase the home, so that they can tear it down, and build something new. The suspicions and prejudices towards people of another race are reversed as is the desire for control over how owners might change the neighborhood. In the second act, we also meet Lena Younger's grandchild, and the daughter of Karl Lindner.



Beneatha's Place

The 2013 play by Kwame Kwei-Armah is set in the bungalow in Lagos, Nigeria, in which Beneatha and her now husband, professor Joseph Asagai, reside. They have moved to Africa after the events of *A Raisin In the Sun* so that Beneatha to pursue her medical degree and Asagai can teach and become a leader in the Nigerian uprising that seeks independence from British rule. The first act takes place in 1959, and the second act in present time.



Segregated Neighborhoods in the Middle of The Twentieth Century

To fully understand what the Younger family is going through in *A Raisin In the Sun*, it's important to know the state of public housing, and some of the discriminatory practices that people employed to keep whites and blacks from sharing the same neighborhoods. The particular practice central to Lorraine Hansberry's experience and her play was restrictive covenants.

Restrictive Covenants

A restrictive covenant is a clause in a contract that requires one party to do—or refrain from doing—certain things. In real property law, a “covenant running with the land”, also imposes duties or restrictions upon the use of that land regardless of the owner. Unfortunately, beginning before the turn of the century and intensifying in the 1920s, the legal arrangement became a way to discriminate against all manner of peoples in cities across the United States, controlling where and whether they could purchase homes.

Racially restrictive covenants refer to contractual agreements that prohibit the purchase, lease, or occupation of a piece of property by a particular group of people. Racially restrictive covenants set out mutual agreements between property owners in a neighborhood not to sell to certain categories of people, especially Black, Jewish, Asian, and other immigrant groups. These agreements were enforced through the cooperation of real estate boards and neighborhood associations.

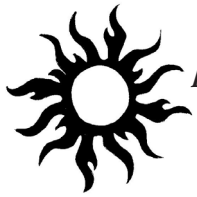
The practice of private, racially restrictive covenants intensified in Chicago as a reaction to the Great Migration of southern blacks. These covenants were ruled “private” agreements by a Supreme Court case in 1926, *Corrigan v. Buckley*, that perpetuated residential segregation. The practice of using racial covenants became so socially acceptable that in 1937 a nationwide magazine of circulation awarded 10 communities a “shield of honor” for restrictions against the “wrong kind of people”. The practice was so widespread that by 1940, 80% of property in Chicago and Los Angeles carried restrictive covenants barring black families.

The Set - housing for the Youngers' on-stage

Stage directions state that Mama and Beneatha share a room; Walter Lee and Ruth sleep in a corner nook walled off from the living room with a curtain, and their son, Travis, sleeps on the couch.

Look for set designer Gary Hoff's indications that in an apartment so small, there is no privacy. Everybody knows your business, and everybody has an opinion. He purposefully leaves out walls and uses freestanding doors to help with the feeling that everyone has access all the time. Everyone in the family shares the space. All the neighbors on the hall share the same bathroom.

The caverns of apartment housing surrounding the Youngers' building crowd in, with small windows that can look into each other's spaces, further eroding privacy, and contrasting with Mama's dream of owning their own house.



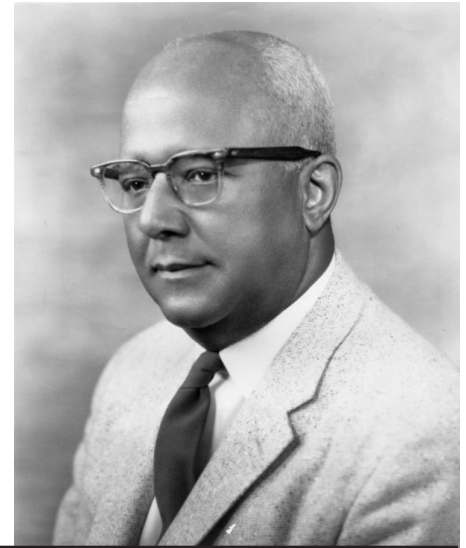
Real Life Connection - Carl Hansberry

In 1937, Lorraine Hansberry's father purchased a home in Chicago's then white Washington Park neighborhood. Two days after his family moved in and had been attacked with bricks thrown through the windows, the Hansberrys' new neighbors filed suit against them in Cook County court for violating a restrictive covenant. The neighborhood group sought an injunction against the Hansberrys to force them to vacate the property.

Carl Hansberry was a successful businessman, real estate broker, and political activist. He decided to fight the restrictive covenant in court, even though the neighborhood hostility continued, and Mrs. Hansberry often spent nights guarding the house with a loaded pistol.

The Circuit Court ruled against Hansberry, ordering his family to move, and the Illinois Supreme Court upheld the decision. With a team of NAACP lawyers backing him, Carl Hansberry took the case to the United States Supreme Court. In *Hansberry v. Lee* (1940), the court ruled in his favor, but primarily on a technicality, without addressing the legality of racial covenants.

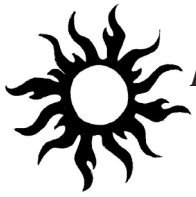
Nevertheless, the Hansberry case is considered a civil rights landmark, which arguably helped pave the way for the Supreme Court decision in *Shelley v. Kraemer* (1948) which found racial covenants unconstitutional under the 14th Amendment. Carl Hansberry did not live to see this decision. He died in 1946 while visiting Mexico, to investigate the possibility of moving there.



Certainly influenced by her father, Lorraine Hansberry dedicated much of her life, as a writer and speaker, to activism.

At left: Supporters at a Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) fundraiser at the home of actor and activist Theodore Bikel. Holding hands and singing are (left to right) Avon M. Rollins, Lorraine Hansberry, Theo Bikel, Nina Simone, Marion Barry, Jr., John Lewis, unidentified man, unidentified woman, Ella Baker.

With thanks to the Lorraine Hansberry Literary Trust - photo originally published in the New York Amsterdam News.



Institutional Racism - Institutional racism (also known as institutionalized racism) is a form of racism expressed in the practice of social and political institutions. The government, many banks, and many insurance companies were all involved in limiting opportunities for home ownership for people of color.

Public Housing in America

Though it seemed a positive step in some ways, public housing served segregation purposes as well by regulating living locations and conditions for large groups of people.

Permanent, federally funded housing came into being in the United States as a part of Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal. The National Industrial Recovery Act of 1933, directed the Public Works Administration (PWA) to develop a program for the "construction, reconstruction, alteration, or repair under public regulation or control of low-cost housing and slum clearance projects..."

The result was the Housing Act of 1949, which dramatically expanded the role of the federal government in both public and private housing. Part of Truman's Fair Deal, the Act covered three primary areas:

- (1) It expanded the Federal Housing Administration (FHA) and federal involvement in mortgage insurance,
- (2) under Title I, it provided authority and funds for slum clearance and urban renewal,
- (3) it initiated construction of a significant public housing program. Title II of the legislation stated the goal of a "decent home in a decent environment for every American, Truman told the press:

"[This legislation] opens up the prospect of decent homes in wholesome surroundings for low-income families now living in the squalor of the slums. It equips the Federal Government, for the first time, with effective means for aiding cities in the vital task of clearing slums and rebuilding blighted areas. This legislation permits us to take a long step toward increasing the well-being and happiness of millions of our fellow citizens. Let us not delay in fulfilling that high purpose."

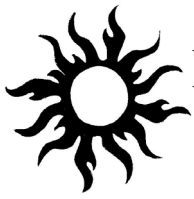
Redlining

Beginning in the early 1930s, a ranking system designed to represent neighborhoods in northern and southern states was implemented as a means to ensure segregation of blacks and whites. Redlining is the practice of arbitrarily denying or limiting financial services to specific neighborhoods, generally because its residents are people of color or are poor. The Youngers' neighborhood definitely suffered from this practice. Without bank loans and insurance, redlined areas lacked the capital essential for investment and redevelopment. Without financial commitments to an area, whole sections of metropolitan areas fell into disrepair.

The system included four strata from highest to lowest; A: green; B: blue; C: yellow; D: red. Neighborhoods that were integrated, containing Jews or foreigners, were given ratings of B or C. Those with any black presence at all, regardless of class, were rated D: Red, hence the moniker, "redlining". The consequences of such rating ranged from outright denial of mortgages to denial of home insurance for prospective residents of "Red" neighborhoods, thereby preventing black families the right to private housing, barring them from the very thing that provides security and wealth and confining them to neighborhoods designated by local and federal government.

The most troubling fact about redlining was that its existence was not clandestine or "off the books". These were mandates enacted and enforced by the Federal Housing Administration (created in 1933); an agency whose influence dictated how and with whom banks would invest their money. The FHA created rating maps that designated where neighborhoods fell within the housing stratum. Banks used these maps to guide their decisions on where mortgage funds would be allocated. Thus, the FHA fervently discouraged mortgage lenders from granting loans to residents of "Red" neighborhood or black home buyers seeking to purchase property in predominantly white neighborhoods.

Sources upittynegronetwork.files.wordpress.com; chicagohistorytoday.wordpress.com; www.realtor.com/news/lorraine-hansberry-raisin-in-the-sun-woodlawn-washington-park ; news.lib.uchicago.edu/blog/2013/03/06/lorraine-hansberry-her-chicago-law-story/



Intro:

Lorraine Hansberry was inspired by the poetry of Langston Hughes and found complementary themes for her play in his work (see page 2). His words captured just what she wanted to say in the title.

What writing impresses students with its expression of exactly what they think?

Objectives:

The students will research song lyrics or poetry for an inspiring, just-right phrase or line.

The students will choose a lyric from a song or poem as a title for a new play.

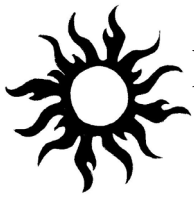
The students will write a preview for the play they have titled, with basic circumstances, characters, and skeletal plot.

Steps:

1. **Gotta have inspiration!:** Ask students think of a lyric or line from their favorite song or poem, that has imagery, the way the phrase “a raisin in the sun” does. Encourage them to pick a line that they really connect with.
2. **The playwright’s shoes:** Based on their personal connection, ask students, “Read your chosen lyric out loud. Close your eyes and say the lyric. Think of a person that, the lyric brings to mind. This person can be someone that you know. Imagine a situation that person finds themselves in, that reflects the lyric.
3. **Imagine the plot:** Ask students to further develop their new creation and begin to add details using the 5W format. Ask them to go as far as they can, imagining a new play.
4. **5Ws:** Every story has a set of given circumstances that its creator has invented. We call them the 5Ws:
 - Who: Who are the characters? One of them probably is the person that you saw in your story image. How old are they? What’s their belief system? What’s their relationship to each other?
 - What: What are the characters doing? Occupation, particular activities, etc
 - When: Year, date, season, historical time period.
 - Where: Place, location, city, state, country, region, planet, galaxy
 - Why: What do the characters want? What is their purpose for doing what they’re doing?
5. **Tease our minds:** Using the 5W’s that they created, students will write a teaser, a publicity blurb for their new play. Below is the preview for *A Raisin In the Sun*:

The Younger family, frustrated with living in a crowded Chicago apartment, sees the arrival of a \$10,000 insurance check as the answer to their prayers. Matriarch Lena Younger proudly puts down a down payment of a house, in an all-white suburban neighborhood. But the family is divided when Lena entrusts the balance of the money to her mercurial son Walter Lee, against the wishes of her daughter, and daughter-in law. It takes the strength and integrity of this African American family to battle against generations of prejudice to try to achieve their piece of the American Dream.

6. **Cast it!** Ask students to decide which well-know actors will play the roles in their play.



Intro:

Many of the characters in *A Raisin In The Sun* express dreams or aspirations for their lives.

- Lena Younger seeks a home for her family.
- Walter Lee desperately wants to start a business.
- Beneatha dreams of being a doctor.

What will Travis's dream be?

As the youngest member of the family at age 10-11, Travis Younger is an important driving force for the dreams of his parents and his grandmother. He does not share his own dreams in the play; the only sign of his aspirations comes when his father asks him what he wants to be when he grows up. His answer is a bus driver. His father is not satisfied and wants him to dream bigger.

Objectives:

- The students will imagine and journal about future choices and possibilities for Travis Younger.
- The students will research job options during the 1950s, 1960s, or 1970s or 1980s.
- The students will compare and contrast the aspirations they create for Travis with those of the other members of his family, their own family, and themselves.

Materials: Paper, writing utensils

Steps:

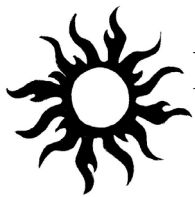
1. Ask students to interview their parents or grandparents about what they wanted to do, at age 10, when they grew up. Did their dreams change as they got older? What kinds of jobs did they do when they were younger? What barriers did they have to face to get a job? Did they want to do a job that no longer has relevance? Are they doing a job now that they did not know about or could not imagine before?
2. Ask the students to research professions of the late 1960s and early 1970s. There are several occupations that have drastically changed, or don't exist today. Have the students select three potential professions that Travis Younger might choose to pursue and find out more.
 - What might be the training/ career path like for someone that wanted to pursue each profession in the time period in question.
 - Is a college degree required?
 - Is there graduate level training?
 - What's the compensation level for this particular professional?
 - How has this vocation changed and does it still exist today?

This website includes historical wage information:

libraryguides.missouri.edu/pricesandwages/home

Job types will take a little more investigative internet searching.

3. *A Raisin in the Sun* is set "somewhere between WW II and the present". For this activity, we will bypass the 1940s and begin with Travis at 12 years-old in 1955. Ask students to choose one of the scenarios on the next page to research, imagine, and journal about. If possible, encourage them to write in first person as if they were Travis.



At right: Lorraine Hansberry giving the Tapawingo leadership presentation to group of African American youth at Camp Minisink, Port Jervis, NY in August, 1960. The New York City Mission Society operated Camp Minisink, the first sleep-away camp for impoverished African American children and teens from NYC. The Tapawingo Honor Society, founded in 1942, was a program for young people as preparation for service as counselors at Camp Minisink.
Photo by Gin Briggs.

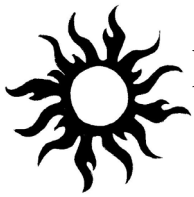


“Seems like God don’t see fit to give the black man nothing but dreams—but He did give us children to make them dreams seem worthwhile.”

Mama to Ruth, Act III, *A Raisin in the Sun*

- Entry One - 1955: Travis is still a child, not much older than when we encounter him in the play. This entry should include a moment of inspiration, a turning point in Travis’ life where we see his aspirations begin to crystallize. For example: A meaningful experience with a pet, or other animal, might inspire Travis to be a veterinarian. Ask students how Travis will find out information about his world with no computer. What will be hard to accomplish with this dream?
- Entry Two - 1965 (Beneatha’s age): Travis is in his twenties. He is close to the same age Beneatha is during events in the play. What obstacles has he had to overcome, just to get to this point? Did he finish school? Is he in college? Is he still living in Chicago? Has he been involved in the civil rights movement?
- Entry Three - 1975 (Walter Lee and Ruth’s age): Travis is in his thirties. He’s close to the same age as his parents are in the play. What are the obstacles and rewards of the career path that he’s chosen for himself? Does he have a spouse? Children of his own? If so, what’s their relationship like? What goals does he still want to pursue? Is it possible to reach them from his current economic situation?
- Entry Four - 1988 (Lena/Mama’s age): Travis is closer to Mama’s age. Is he still doing the same job? Who are his dependents? Does he make enough to take care of his family? Will he be able to retire? What dreams does he have for those who come behind him?

4. Ask students to compare their own dreams to those of their parents and grandparents, and to what was possible for an African American boy like Travis born during WW II.



Intro:

In *A Raisin In The Sun*, the Younger family is waiting to collect on a \$10,000 life insurance policy, as the result of the family patriarch's death.

Lena Younger has a dream of using the money to move her family out of the tenement apartment that they share and then buying a house. When asked by her daughter-in-law what's she going to do with the money Lena (Mama) replies:

MAMA: Been thinking we could meet the notes on a little old two-story somewhere with a yard where Travis could play in the summertime—if we used part of the insurance for a down payment and everybody kind of pitch in.

Lena's son, Walter Lee, expects to become the head of the family after his father's death. He has a plan to open his own business and wants his mother to trust him with the \$10,000 so he can partner with two other investors:

WALTER: You see, this little liquor store cost \$75,000 and we figured the initial investment on the place be 'bout \$30,000, see. Ten thousand each. Course, there's a couple of hundred you got to pay so's you don't spend your life waiting for them clowns to get your license approved.

Dear Teachers,
Lorraine Hansberry's characters are African American, but this play's truths can be spoken by everyone. When reading this scene out loud, students should focus on the truth of what the characters need and want. Saying the words respectfully, with honesty, as written, is the best way to honor the intention of the playwright, no matter what the ethnic heritage of the student reader is.

Objectives:

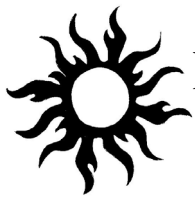
The students will examine characters' competing dreams by reading a scene aloud.

The students will portray characters' wants and objectives with line readings that show emotions.

The students will share their opinions about issues in the play.

Steps:

1. Share the above introduction with students.
2. Pass out a copies of the scene on pages 18-19. In the following scene from Act I, scene ii, we see both characters try to voice their wants and needs. Have the students form a circle. Each student should take turns clockwise in the circle, reading until the next character speaks.
3. Ask the students to put themselves in the shoes of the actors for a moment. How do you behave in your own life to show someone that you want, or need something desperately? Have you observed someone else, whether in your life, or in a play, movie, television show, express a need or want to someone else? In what ways does their behavior change, the more they worked to get what they wanted? If you were playing Walter Lee or Mama, how would you express a want? Would you pause to decide if you were right? How would you stand? Would you be still or move and use gestures? How would the volume of your voice change?



4. Ask students to choose a line from the scene in which one of the characters wants something from the other. Ask the student to deliver the line as if they are trying to get a desired result from the other character. Challenge them to address some of the actor questions from #3 with their delivery.
5. Clear some space in the room. Ask the students to line up in a straight line beside each other. Mark the place where the line is formed with a length of tape on the floor. Students will be “crossing the line” and taking 5-10 steps forward as space allows.
6. Explain that when you read the following statements, the students will either cross the line or remain in their places. Communicate to the students that this is a forced choice activity, and consequently, even staying put behind the line will communicating something. After each question is read, thank the students for making a choice, and have everyone return to the starting place.



Lorraine Hansberry on opening night
of *A Raisin in the Sun* on Broadway.
With thanks to Taye Hansberry

Cross the line if...

You think money is in the way of you and your dreams

You believe your parents or guardians understand you

You have ever tried to convince an older adult of something

You believe owning a liquor store is a viable business

You believe Walter Lee is the head of his family

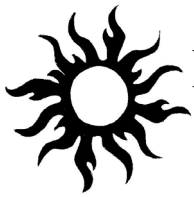
You believe financial stability is the most important aspect of a strong family

You believe owning a home is a better investment than owning a business

You value freedom over money

You believe Walter Lee has the best plan forward for the family

7. After the last statement, the students who have crossed the line turn around and face the other students who didn't cross the line. That group will form the “Walter Lee” group, and the other group will be the “Mama” group. Ask the students to share why they agree or disagree with Walter Lee's plan to move the family forward. Chart the reasons why each student believes Mama has the better plan or why they support Walter Lee.



Excerpt from Act II, scene ii

page 18

MAMA: Walter, what is the matter with you?

WALTER: Matter with me? Ain't nothing the matter with ME!

MAMA: Yes, there is. Something eating you up like a crazy man. Something more than me not giving you this money. The past few years I been watching it happen to you. You get all nervous acting and kind of wild in the eyes. I said sit there now, I'm talking to you.

WALTER: Mama—I don't need no nagging at me today.

MAMA: Seem like you getting to a place where you always tied up in some kind of knot about something. But if anybody ask you 'bout it you just yell at 'em and bust out the house and go out and drink somewhere. Walter Lee, people can't live with that. Ruth's a good, patient girl in her way—but you getting to be too much. Boy, don't make the mistake of driving that girl away from you.

WALTER: Why—what she ever do for me?

MAMA: She loves you.

WALTER: Mama—I'm going out. I want to be by myself for a while.

MAMA: I'm sorry 'bout your liquor store, son. It just wasn't the thing for us to do. That's what I want to tell you about—

WALTER: I got to go out, Mama—

MAMA: It's dangerous, son.

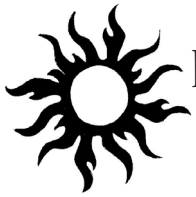
WALTER: What's dangerous?

MAMA: When a man goes outside his home to look for peace.

WALTER: Then why can't there never be no peace in this house, then?

MAMA: You done found it in some other house, then?

WALTER: No—there ain't no woman! Why do women always think there's a woman somewhere



Excerpt from Act II, scene ii

page 19

when a man gets restless? Do you know what this money means to me? Do you know what this money can do for us? Mama—Mama—I want so many things—

MAMA: Yes, son—

WALTER: I want so many things that they are driving me kind of crazy. Mama—look at me.

MAMA: I'm looking at you. You are a good -looking boy. You got a job, a nice wife, a fine boy and—

WALTER: A job. Mama, a job? I open and close car doors all day long. I drive a man around in his limousine and say, "Yes, sir. No, sir. Very good, sir. Shall I take the drive, sir?" Mama, that ain't no kind of a job—that ain't nothin' at all. Mama, I don't know if I can make you understand.

MAMA: Understand what, baby?

WALTER: Sometimes it's like I can see the future stretched out in front of me—just plain as day. The future MAMA. Hanging over there at the edge of my days. Just waiting for me. But it don't have to be. Mama—sometimes when I'm downtown driving that man around and I pass them cool, quiet-looking restaurants where them white boys are sitting back and talking 'bout things—Sitting there turning deals worth millions of dollars—sometimes I see guys don't look much older than me—

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

WALTER: Because it is life Mama!

MAMA: Oh—So now money is life. Once upon a time freedom used to be life—now it's money.

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

MAMA: No—something has changed. You something new, boy. In my time we was worried about no being lynched and getting to the North if we could and how to stay alive and still have a pinch of dignity too. Now here come you and Beneatha—talking about things we ain't never even thought about hardly, me and your daddy. You ain't satisfied or proud of nothing we done. I mean that you had a home; that we kept you out of trouble till you was grown; that you don't have to ride to work on the back of nobody's street car—You my children—but how different we done become.

WALTER: You don't understand. Mama, you just don't understand.



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