



A Raisin In the Sun

by Lorraine Hansberry

Teacher's Guide

Written By Mary Ellen Snodgrass

PERMA-BOUND
THE STRONGEST BOOKS YOU CAN BUY

**LIVING
LITERATURE
SERIES**

A Perma-Bound Production

This guide was prepared using the 1994 First Vintage Books edition., ©1988. Other editions may differ.

Synopsis

Act I, Scene 1

"Big Walter" Younger, a black laborer, works himself to death after his son Claude dies. Friday morning a few months after, survivors await an insurance check worth \$10,000. Crowded into a one-bedroom, roach-ridden southside Chicago tenement are his widow, Lena Eggleston Younger, and her two children: 20-year-old daughter Beneatha, a pretentious college student, and Walter Lee, the Arnold family chauffeur. He nurtures big dreams of rescuing his wife Ruth and their ten-year-old son Travis from the ghetto.

Walter Lee confides to Ruth that he joined Bobo and Willy Harris the previous day in plans for opening a liquor store. Beneatha, who longs for a medical degree, denies her brother's right to the insurance money, which she contends belongs to Lena. A family dispute causes Walter to leave in a rage. Lena slaps Beneatha for sacrilege and asserts herself as head of the household. After Beneatha slams out the door and Travis collects carfare and departs for school, Ruth and Lena discuss Lena's plans to buy a house. Ruth sinks into a faint.

Act I, Scene 2

The next morning, Lena borrows cleanser to complete housecleaning. Ruth reveals plans to end her two-month pregnancy and asks Lena for five dollars to pay the abortionist. Beneatha's friend, Joseph Asagai, an idealistic Yoruban who is visiting in Canada, visits Beneatha and gives her a Nigerian dress and toque and recorded native music. After he leaves, the family exults when the insurance check arrives. Walter Lee returns and again flies into a rage because his family belittles his plan to invest his share of the money. He takes no action on Lena's warning that Ruth seeks an abortion.

Act II, Scene 1

That afternoon, while Lena irons, Beneatha, dressed like a Nigerian, dances to native music. Walter Lee, who is drunk, pretends to be an African warrior. Beneatha's date, George Murchison, sneers at her interest in African history and at Walter Lee's chumminess. After George and Beneatha leave for an 8:30 theater date, Walter blames Ruth for failing to support his dreams. Lena discloses that she has paid \$3,500 down on a house in an all-white neighborhood because homes in black neighborhoods are twice as expensive. Travis and Ruth rejoice at the news, but Walter Lee sulks that he can't launch his liquor store.

Act II, Scene 2

Friday night a few weeks later, the Youngers prepare to move. Beneatha rejects romancing by George Murchison, who leaves. A phone call from Mrs. Arnold reveals that Walter has missed three days of work and may be fired. He confesses that, for three days, he has been sleeping and that he borrowed Willy Harris's car to drive past South Chicago to look at steel mills. He returns to his favorite hangout, the Green Hat.

The next day, he drove to

Wisconsin to look at farms. On Friday, he walked around Chicago's southside, sat on the curb of 39th and South Parkway, and watched negroes before going to the bar.

To bolster his self-esteem, Lena gives him \$6,500 and proclaims him head of the family. She instructs him to deposit \$3,000 for Beneatha's medical school tuition and to keep the remaining \$3,500 for his own needs. Walter brags to Travis that in ten years he will have his own office and a black Chrysler.

Act II, Scene 3

Saturday, a week later, on moving day, Karl Lindner, chairman for the Clybourne Park Improvement Association, arrives unexpectedly and proposes to buy out their interest in the house to keep blacks



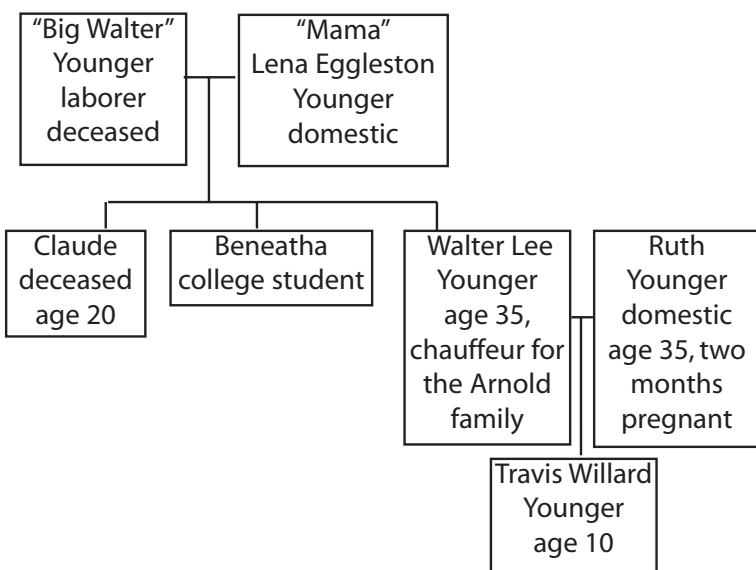
out of the neighborhood. Walter Lee orders Lindner to leave. The family gives Lena a broad-brimmed hat and gardening tools.

Bobo arrives, tense with the news that he spent six hours at the train station the previous day waiting to accompany Willy to Springfield to pay bribes for an immediate liquor license. Bobo confesses that he couldn't find Willy, who held the trio's money. Walter Lee realizes that Willy has stolen their money. To Walter Lee, the money represents all that remains of his father.

Act III

An hour later, Walter Lee sinks into despair and stares at the bedroom ceiling. Asagai proposes marriage to Beneatha, whom he intends to settle in a Nigerian village. Recalling the treatment of Rufus for a head wound after a sledding accident, she dreams of becoming a doctor. Lena and Ruth decide to work to pay for the new house. Meanwhile, Walter Lee accepts Lindner's offer. Lena shames Walter Lee for selling out to racists. Lindner brings the papers, but Walter Lee changes his mind about the house. At Lindner's departure, the Youngers begin the move from the ghetto to Clybourne Park.

Character Genealogy



Author Sketch



As essayist, poet, and activist, and a major force in American theater, Lorraine Vivian Hansberry surprised the literary world by competing with notable white males—Eugene O’Neill, Tennessee Williams, and Archibald MacLeish. Born May 19, 1930, in Chicago, Hansberry, the fourth child and second daughter of teacher Nannie Perry and banker and realtor Carl A. Hansberry, she claimed a proud heritage dating to Tennessee slaves. The Hansberrys lived so well that her father was labeled a slum lord and local children isolated Lorraine because she was rich. Famous black visitors came to their home, including athletes Jesse Owens and Joe Louis, musician Duke Ellington, and actor Paul Robeson. In 1938, Hansberry’s father moved his family to a white neighborhood. An unidentified white assailant threw a concrete slab through the window, endangering Lorraine’s life. Carl Hansberry grew bitter at local bigotry and considered relocating in Mexico. He died in 1946 before completing the move.

Educated at Englewood High School, Hansberry left the University of Wisconsin in her junior year to study at Chicago’s Art Institute, Roosevelt College, and New York’s Jefferson School for Social Research, where she came under the influence of critic W. E. B. Du Bois. Other adventures took her to Guadalajara, Mexico, to study painting and to part time jobs as waitress and department store clerk. While employed at the New York office of *Freedom* magazine, she produced quality line drawings and served as editor. In 1950, she wrote satiric articles for the *Village Voice* and *Black Scholar* and allied with Greenwich Village’s gay community. Three years later, she married songwriter Robert Nemiroff, a white Jewish communist who became her literary executor and producer. She moved to a country house in Croton-on-Hudson and divorced him in 1964.

Hansberry rejected the warnings of backers for *A Raisin in the Sun*, who wanted her to turn the drama into a musical. Following a brief off-Broadway run, the original version, starring Ruby Dee, Sidney Poitier, and Louis Gossett, opened at the Ethel

Barrymore Theater on March 11, 1959. The success of the play provoked boycotts, pickets, and a storm of demand for integrated audiences. In the 1960s, Hansberry joined the fight for civil rights and was investigated by the FBI. She donated money to SNCC and the Mississippi Freedom Riders and criticized the House Un-American Activities Committee, which investigated her ex-husband. Columbia Pictures censored her screen version of *A Raisin in the Sun* for daring statements about racism. A financial success, the film won an Academy Award nomination for best screenplay and recognition at the 1961 Cannes Film Festival. The musical, *Raisin*, won a Tony. Hansberry suffered from ulcers and anemia, convalesced at the Hotel Victoria, but died on January 12, 1965.

Critic's Corner

After achieving fame on the basis of a single drama, Hansberry earned from James Baldwin a singular kudo: "Never in the history of the American theatre had so much of the truth of black people's lives been seen on the stage." Despite her momentous achievement, she died at age 34 without reaching her numerous goals. She left unfinished a novel, a biography of Mary Wollstonecraft, an opera on the life of Toussaint L'Ouverture, and three plays, which Nemiroff refined and published. The first black female playwright to be produced on Broadway, Hansberry was the youngest playwright to win the 1959 New York Drama Critics Circle Award. Her play, set in the post-World War II decades, gave promise of a brilliant literary career, but proved to be the most significant of her numerous incomplete works.

Taking her text from Langston Hughes's poem, "What Happens to a Dream Deferred," Hansberry delineates the balance of love and mercy against a steady flow of frustration, denigration, and hopelessness. By the end of the play, she proves that the wisdom and benevolence of the family is equal to the cynicism of white bigots. A quarter century after her death, *A Raisin in the Sun* was revived at the Kennedy Center, in a 1983 Yale Repertory Theatre production, and as a 1989 PBS American Playhouse presentation, starring Danny Glover and Esther Rolle. In 2005, Phylicia Rasahad and Sean Combs returned *A Raisin in the Sun* to Broadway and earned for Rashad the first Tony award to a black actress. The following year, mime-actor Elizabeth Van Dyke

opened "Love to All," a stage encomium to Hansberry, at New York's Passage Theater. Hansberry's radical autobiography, *To Be Young, Gifted and Black* (1969) and her dynamic essays enjoy a greater popularity now than during her lifetime. Her libertarian philosophy influences the works of playwright Anna Deavere Smith.

Timeline of the Action

years before the play

opens Rufus injures his face in a sledding accident.

a few months before the

play opens Claude Younger dies; "Big Walter" Younger works himself to death.

Thursday Walter Lee Younger, Bobo, and Willy Harris plan to invest in a liquor store.

Friday

morning The Younger family awaits an insurance check worth \$10,000.

A family dispute causes Walter to leave in a rage.

later As Ruth and Lena discuss Lena's plans to buy a house, Ruth faints.

Saturday

morning Ruth reveals her plans to get an abortion. Joseph Asagai gives Beneatha a Nigerian dress and toque.

later The insurance check arrives.

Saturday

afternoon Beneatha dances to native music. George Murchison sneers at Walter Lee.

before

8:30 P. M. George and Beneatha leave for the theater. Lena discloses that she has paid \$3,500 down on a house in Clybourne Park. Walter Lee sulks that he can't invest in a liquor store.

Wednesday a few

weeks later Walter Lee misses work and drives to the Green Hat.

Thursday He drives to Wisconsin.

Friday He walks around Chicago's southside.

Friday night The Youngers prepare to move. Lena gives Walter Lee \$6,500.

Saturday,

a week later Karl Lindner proposes to buy out their interest in the house to keep blacks out of Clybourne Park. Walter Lee orders Lindner to leave. The family gives Lena a hat and gardening tools.

- later** Bobo reveals that Willy has stolen their money.
- an hour later** Asagai proposes marriage to Beneatha. Lena and Ruth decide to pay for the new house.
- meanwhile** Walter Lee accepts Lindner's offer, but changes his mind. The Youngers begin the move.

Hansberry's Published Works

- "Simone de Beauvoir and *The Second Sex*: An American Commentary" (1957)
- "Willy Loman, Walter Lee Young and He Who Must Live," *Village Voice* (12 August 1959)
- The Drinking Gourd* (1960)
- "On Summer," *Playbill* (27 June 1960)
- "This Complex of Womanhood," *Ebony* (15 August 1960)
- "Genet, Mailer, and the New Paternalism," *Village Voice* (1 June 1961)
- "A Challenge to Artists," *Freedomways* (winter 1963)
- The Movement: A Documentary of a Struggle for Equality* (1964)
- The Sign in Sidney Brustein's Window* (1964)
- "The Black Revolution and the White Backlash," *National Negro Digest* (August 1964)
- "The Nation Needs Your Gifts," *Negro Digest* (August 1964)
- A Matter of Colour: Documentary of Struggles for Racial Equality in the USA* (1965)
- "The Legacy of W. E. B. Du Bois," *Freedomways* (winter 1965)
- Three Negro Plays* (1969)
- To Be Young, Gifted, and Black* (1969)
- Les Blancs* (1970)
- What Use Are Flowers?* (1972)
- "A Challenge to Artists" (1972)
- The Collected Last Plays of Lorraine Hansberry* (1972)
- Raisin* (adaptation, 1974)
- "Original Prospectus for the John Brown Memorial Theatre of Harlem," *Black Scholar* (July/August 1979)
- "The Negro Writer and His Roots: Toward a New Romanticism," *Black Scholar* (March/April 1981)
- "All the Dark and Beautiful Warriors," *Village Voice* (August 1983)
- "In Defense of the Equality of Men," *Norton Anthology of Literature by Women* (1985)

Bibliography

- Abell, Joy L. "African/American: Lorraine Hansberry's *Les Blancs* and the American Civil Rights Movement," *African American Review* 35, no. 3 (fall 2001): 459-470.
- Ardolino, Frank. "Hansberry's *A Raisin in the Sun*," *Explicator* 63, no. 3 (spring 2005): 181-183.
- Armstrong, Linda. "Phylicia Rashad Makes Tony History," *New York Amsterdam News* (10 June 2004): 1, 34.
- Gourdine, Angeletta K. M. "The Drama of Lynching in Two Blackwomen's Drama, or Relating Grimke's Rachel to Hansberry's *A Raisin in the Sun*," *Modern Drama* 41, no. 4 (winter 1998): 533.
- Grant, Micki. "Alive and Well," *American Theatre* 22, no. 3 (March 2005): 46.
- Hambleton, Vicki. "A Raisin in the Sun," *Footsteps* 3, no. 3 (May/June 2001): 34-35.
- Hansberry, Lorraine. "A Raisin in the Sun," *Scholastic Scope* (20 September 2004): 5-11.
- Lahr, John. "Puffy and Fluffy," *New Yorker* 80, no. 11 (10 May 2004): 110-111.
- Leeson, Richard M. *Lorraine Hansberry: A Research and Production Sourcebook*. Westport, Conn.: Greenwood, 1997.
- "Lorraine Hansberry: Personal Struggles," *Literary Cavalcade* 57, no. 8 (May 2005): 22-23.
- Ogunnaike, Lola. "Helping the Hip-Hop World Find *A Raisin in the Sun*," *New York Times* (26 April 2004): E1, E5.
- "One Tough Mother," *Chicago* 49, no. 5 (May 2000): 43.
- Rich, Adrienne. *Blood, Bread, and Poetry: Selected Prose, 1979-1985*. New York: Norton, 1986.
- Scheader, Catherine. *Lorraine Hansberry*. Springfield, N. J.: Enslow, 1998.
- Siegel, Naomi. "Dreams, Now," *New York Times* (19 March 2006): 14.
- Snodgrass, Mary Ellen. *Encyclopedia of Feminist Literature*. New York: Facts on File, 2006.
- Steyn, Mark. "Raisin' Cain," *New Criterion* 22, no. 10 (June 2004): 32-36.
- Thomas, Jerry. "Reading 'Raisin,'" *Black Issues Book Review* 5, no. 4 (July/August 2003): 52-53.

General Objectives

1. To describe matters of education, hygiene, sanitation, and nutrition as they apply to poor blacks
2. To isolate incidents of discrimination and humiliation of minorities
3. To discuss the value of education and the arts to people in the ghetto
4. To epitomize the pressures of living in poverty
5. To contrast the outlook of individual women in the play
6. To determine the importance of money as a social and economic impetus
7. To summarize the atmosphere and tone of emotional outbursts
8. To account for each minor character's importance to the action
9. To locate examples of dialect, slang, euphemism, and substandard English
10. To connect the play to a particular era of black history

Specific Objectives

1. To comprehend Walter Lee's search for self-esteem
2. To compare Big Walter with his son and grandson
3. To account for sibling rivalry between Walter Lee and Beneatha
4. To describe Lena's ability to compromise and to tolerate hardship
5. To contrast how Beneatha, Lena, and Ruth cope with despair
6. To denote Walter Lee's lack of interest in Ruth's plight
7. To explain Hansberry's choice of names such as Beneatha, Lena, and Ruth
8. To outline the failed plan of Willy, Bobo, and Walter Lee
9. To contrast moods before and after Lindner's first visit
10. To project the Youngers' chances of succeeding in Clybourne Park

Literary Terms and Applications

For a better understanding of Hansberry's style, present the following terms and applications to the play:

Climax: the height of an action, a crisis or turning point from which all behaviors or attitudes are permanently altered and nothing can ever be what it once was. The high point for the Younger family comes in Act II, Scene 3 when Bobo confesses that Willy did not keep their appointment to finish investing their combined funds in the liquor store. The sordid story implies failure for Walter Lee and continued poverty for the rest of the family. The hopes of escaping the ghetto and educating Beneatha in medical school seem to vanish with the cash.

Comic Relief: a witty exchange, skit, interlude, or soliloquy that the playwright deliberately inserts to ease tensions and lighten a dark or grim mood within a serious work. In *A Raisin in the Sun*, comic relief heightens the troubling events that derive from poverty, as with Travis's lack of his own room and Ruth's intent to abort her child to spare the family another person to feed and house. These situations in Act I contrast with the humor of Beneatha dressed in Nigerian garb and dancing to native music. The addition of Walter in a drunken state enhances the absurdity of George Murchison's snobbery and disdain.

Contrast: the obvious difference or dissonance that appears when disparate objects, persons, statements, themes, or situations are compared can be found in literary foils, such as hero and villain, round and flat characters, or protagonist and antagonist. Hansberry maintains contrast throughout the play by offsetting youthful foolishness in Beneatha with Lena's mature wisdom and by comparing Joseph Asagai's idealism with George Murchison's faddish dress and attitudes and with Walter Lee's venality. The most hopeful note derives from the contrast that develops in Walter Lee. Although he seems self-centered and resentful in the earlier scenes, he gains stature for himself and his family because he rejects Lindner's shameful offer and aids the family in fleeing poverty.

The Importance of Setting

As a demonstration of confinement, the action of *A Raisin in the Sun* is limited to the Youngers' ghetto apartment on Chicago's southside. Hansberry articulates the heritage of poverty in shabby furniture and worn carpets, failed attempts at cheer with crocheted doilies, and the single window, a symbol of the limited horizon the Youngers have to boost their morale. The crowded bedroom for Walter Lee and Ruth was once a breakfast room. Its cramped space augments family tensions that derive from too much making do on too little money. To add to the humiliation of poverty, life in the tenement requires insecticide spray in cracked walls to kill roaches, Mr. Barnett's stalking of oversized rats, and the sharing of a bathroom in the hall, a source of contention among those who wait in line. Most heart-rending for the family is the make-down bed in the living room that Travis uses. The packed-in feeling of living in a ghetto flat precipitates Ruth's murderous intent to rid herself of an unborn child and Beneatha's complaint that the family suffers "acute ghetto-itis."

In contrast to the family's tiny living space is the open road and upscale living style of Walter Lee's employer, Mr. Arnold. Walter Lee castigates his personal failure when he drives downtown and passes "cool, quiet-looking restaurants" where white men plan their lives and make financial deals. To escape the pressures of his daily routine as a chauffeur, Walter Lee flees work for three days to drive past steel mills, hang out at the Green Hat, look at farms in Wisconsin, and stroll 39th and South Parkway to observe black Chicagoans.

Dreaming is a central theme in the play. Walter Lee envisions himself as a business executive with a black Chrysler for himself, a Cadillac convertible for Ruth, and a gardener named Jefferson to pay deference to his successful employer. Lena anticipates a new home with an extra bedroom for Travis and the baby and a double-decker bed for the children to share if the infant is a boy. For a family limited to a single straggling house plant, the dream of a house and yard opens possibilities of a small garden plot, symbolized by Lena's hat and gardening tools. The achievement of their ambitions takes shape in packing crates as the family makes its move to Clybourne Park.

Cross-Curricular Sources

For more information about poverty, abortion, racial unrest, Chicago ghettos, white flight, West Africa, women's literature, and black drama, consult these sources:

Audiocassettes

Stories of Courage, Barnell-Loft
Their Eyes Were Watching God, Caedmon

Books

Mama, Terry McMillan
Their Eyes Were Watching God, Zora Neale Hurston
Warriors Don't Cry, Melba Pattillo Beals

Disc Recording

Raisin, Columbia Records

Internet

Crisis, Grief, and Healing
<http://www.webhealing.com>.

Plays

Fences, August Wilson
Fires in the Mirror, Anna Deavere Smith
The Piano Lesson, August Wilson
Twilight Los Angeles, 1992, Anna Deavere Smith

Poetry

Harlem, Walter Dean Myers
Now Sheba Sings the Song, Maya Angelou
Thomas and Beulah, Rita Dove

Posters

America in the Twentieth Century, Knowledge Unlimited

Reference

Abortion: Opposing Viewpoints, Greenhaven Press
America's Urban Crisis, Knowledge Unlimited
The Atlas of Literature, De Agostini Editions
Black History Month Resource Book, Gale Research
Encyclopedia of Feminist Literature, Facts on File
Historical and Cultural Atlas of African Americans, Macmillan
The Penguin Atlas of Diasporas, Penguin
Self-Fulfillment, Guidance Associates

Science Kit

Thinking Things Through, A. W. Peller

Short Stories

"Blues Ain't No Mockin' Bird," Toni Cade Bambara
"The Revolt of 'Mother,'" Mary Wilkins Freeman

Video

The Color Purple
Driving Miss Daisy
I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings
J. T.
Malcolm X
Places in the Heart
Proud to Be Me
Ragtime

Themes and Motifs

A study of the central issues and situations in Lorraine Hansberry’s *A Raisin in the Sun* should include these aspects:

Themes

- loss
- poverty
- racism
- ambition
- nihilism
- disappointment
- conflict
- peacemaking
- hope
- advancement

Motifs

- ending an unplanned pregnancy
- asserting self over a tyrannical boyfriend
- studying a primitive culture
- righting old wrongs and resolving old griefs
- restoring self-esteem through action

Related Reading

Isabel Allende, *The House of the Spirits*
 Maya Angelou, *Now Sheba Sings the Song*
 Toni Cade Bambara, “Blues Ain’t No Mockin’ Bird”
 Pearl Buck, *The Good Earth* and *The Woman*
 Kate Chopin, “Désirée’s Baby”
 Rita Dove, *Thomas and Beulah*
 Laura Esquivel, *Like Water for Chocolate*
 Mary Wilkins Freeman, “The Revolt of ‘Mother’”
 Ernest Gaines, *The Autobiography of Miss Jane Pittman*
 Kaye Gibbons, *Ellen Foster*
 Terry McMillan, *Mama*
 Toni Morrison, *Sula*
 Walter Dean Myers, *Harlem*
 Anna Deavere Smith, *Fires in the Mirror* and *Twilight Los Angeles, 1992*
 Susan Straight, *I Been in Sorrow’s Kitchen and Licked Out All the Pots*

Jane Wagner, *J. T.*
 August Wilson, *Fences* and *The Piano Lesson*

Meaning Study

Below are words, phrases, sentences, or thought units that have a particular meaning in the play. Explain each. Act, scene, and page numbers pinpoint the context in which the item appears.

1. Baby, don’t *nothing* happen for you in this world ‘less you pay *somebody* off! (I, i, p. 33)
 (From bitterness, poverty, and frustration, Walter Lee has grown cynical about money and power. From watching successful whites no more intelligent or ambitious than he, he has let jealousy overwhelm reason. He comments, “Sometimes when I’m downtown 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—” At the age of 35, he believes that money alone can buy him a business and a place in a market where graft is a normal part of the overhead.)

2. RUTH He was a good man, Mr. Younger.
 MAMA Yes, a fine man—just couldn’t never catch up with his dreams, that’s all. (I, i, p. 46)
 (With her usual generosity, Lena summarizes the fate of Big Walter, a husband and father who worked himself to death struggling to buy a way out of the ghetto for his family. As Mama says in her preceding speech:
 . . . he sured loved his children. Always wanted them to have something—be something. That’s where Brother gets all these notions, I reckon. Big Walter used to say, he’d get right wet in the eyes sometimes, lean his head back with the water standing in his eyes and say, “Seem like God didn’t see fit to give the black man nothing but dreams—but He did give us children to make them dreams seem worthwhile.”
 (When the play opens, Big Walter has recently died. He has failed to provide the Youngers with a better life outside the ghetto, and his son, Walter Lee, has inherited the dream.)

3. Now—you say after me, in my mother’s house there is still God. (I, i, p. 51)
 (A conflict between generations arises from Beneatha, who is young, angry, and impatient, and Lena, who is older, wiser, and still in charge. Beneatha declares, “There simply is no blasted God—there is only man and it is he who makes miracles!” Mama angrily retorts that in her house God cannot be denied.

In her immaturity, Bennie blames or praises humanity for its failings and successes. To her, God has no part in either outcome.

In contrast, Mama, an iron-willed symbol of patience and humility, has been molded by an earlier generation. Her religious convictions are rocklike, unyielding to tenuous times. She will not abandon her faith, nor will she permit grown children to blaspheme in her house.)

4. Yes . . . we've all got acute ghetto-itis. (I, ii, p. 60)
(Beneatha coins a word combining ghetto with -itis, a medical suffix meaning "inflamed, diseased." Beneatha indicates that the Younger family suffers from various conditions arising from living in a crowded section of the city where blacks battle rats and roaches, search for jobs that pay a living wage, share toilet facilities with neighbors, and attempt to escape the daily despair that arises from alcohol abuse, crime, racism, and hopelessness.)
5. Assimilationism is so popular in your country. (I, ii, p. 63)
(Joseph Asagai, who has journeyed from Africa to Canada, thinks that he can patronize Beneatha with his brief overview of American ghetto life. His reference to the incorporation of blacks into white lifestyles and mindsets angers her. Later, to Ruth, she reviles "assimilationist Negroes," who include any individual "willing to give up his own culture and submerge himself completely in the dominant, and in this case oppressive culture!")
6. It means . . . it means One for Whom Bread—Food—Is Not Enough. (I, ii, p. 65)
(Joseph Asagai calls Beneatha "Alaiyo," which is a Nigerian name he must translate from the Yoruba word to explain it to her. His choice of terms to describe Beneatha epitomizes her desire for a significant place in the world where she can be of service. The name indicates that Beneatha will never be content to live like Lena and Ruth and to fulfill the traditional role of wife and mother or to work as a low-paid domestic. Ironically, the word also refers to her brother, who threatens her dreams by spending her tuition money on his scheme for a liquor store.)
7. Good night, Prometheus! (II, i, p. 86)
(George responds to Walter Lee's claim to be a "giant surrounded by ants" with a sardonic allusion to a Greek titan. The unknown term confuses Ruth and Walter Lee. The character from Greek mythology is named Prometheus or "forethought" because he helps his brother create animals and humans from clay. His brother, Epimetheus or "afterthought," uses up the wings, fangs, fur, and swift muscles on the animals. To protect the naked figure of man from stronger, fiercer beings, Prometheus steals fire from heaven. For his crime, Zeus chains him to a rock on Mount

Caucasus. Each day, vultures tear out the rebel's liver, which regenerates and meets the same fate the next day. To end his perpetual agony, Hercules rescues Prometheus.)

8. THAT MONEY IS MADE OUT OF MY FATHER'S FLESH— (II, iii, p. 128)
(The money that Lena intends to divide between her children she entrusts to Walter Lee to deposit in a checking account. He places the money in the hands of Willy, one of his two business partners. Walter Lee realizes that Bobo did not meet Willy because Willy stole their capital for the liquor store. In despair, Walter Lee breaks down, fighting the awful truth of his idealism and misplaced trust. Because Big Walter had to die before his family could realize his dream, Walter Lee refers to the money as part of his father's physical body. The line elevates the insurance check to a sacrament—a kind of communion service honoring Big Walter. The loss threatens to destroy his son.)
9. End? Who even spoke of an end? To life? To living? (III, i, p. 134)
(Joseph Asagai, although a minor figure in the play, puts into perspective the real struggle for a better life. He establishes that goals and dreams are ongoing, one replacing the other to form many lifetimes of self-improvement. To Beneatha, the urge for something better forms a circle. To Asagai, the quest cannot be circular or self-defeating. It is a line, "as in geometry, you know, one that reaches into infinity.")
10. He finally come into his manhood today, didn't he? Kind of like a rainbow after the rain... (III, i, p. 151)
(Lena confides to Ruth that Walter Lee has exchanged his cynicism and despair for maturity. By giving up materialism for stronger, more realistic values, he rescues his family from accepting Lindner's point of view that blacks in Clybourne Park would degrade and devalue white homes. Proud and defiant, Walter Lee is like the rainbow that ends Noah's voyage on the ark. Walter Lee rejects fantasies of prestige purchased with easy money and helps his family achieve Big Walter's dream.)

Comprehension Study

Answer the following questions in your own words. There is not always a right answer. Your judgment is important and you should be ready to defend your answers by referring to passages in the play.

Setting

1. Explain how southside Chicago mirrors despair.

(In the opening passage, Lorraine Hansberry describes a decrepit ghetto living room where crocheted doilies cover the worst of years of wear and furniture hides worn spots on the carpet. The weariness that pervades the decor refuses to give place to washing, scrubbing, and polishing. The double use of the living room as Travis's bedroom and the breakfast room as Walter Lee and Ruth's quarters proves that there are more people in the apartment than it was designed to accommodate. Lena and Beneatha share the only bedroom. The arrival of a baby will tax the apartment even further.)

Symbolic of the apartment's spiritual hopelessness is the meager window through which comes a bit of light. Like Lena's pathetic house plant, the small window represents the ray of hope that holds the family to Big Walter Younger's dream of a life outside poverty. While awaiting the insurance check, the surviving Youngers have little else to boost their spirits or to help them recover from the death of their patriarch.)

Motivation

2. Why do Lena's children argue?

(Lena's son and daughter share their father's big dreams for the future, which cause them to squabble and suspect each other of plotting to take the lion's share of the insurance check. Beneatha, who has pursued and discarded numerous hobbies and ambitions, has settled on medical school as the answer to restlessness and self-absorption and a way to achieve her desire to serve and help other people. To pay tuition, she needs part of the money that is coming to the family. Walter Lee, who, at 35, has accomplished little more than his father did, believes that the only way to escape Chicago's southside ghetto is to invest in a liquor store. He challenges that no one trusts him or values his aspirations, yet he fails to earn respect from his wife, mother, and sister for his denigrating remarks and his lack of concern for Ruth, who is sick with worry about her second pregnancy. To end dissension about the check, Beneatha generously proposes that Lena have the final word on spending the \$10,000. Walter Lee implies that Bennie's magnanimity has an ulterior motive. He charges that "if Mama got that money she can always take a few thousand and help you through school too, can't she?" Bennie replies that she hasn't asked for tuition money, but her brother is unimpressed with her innocence. He counters, "No! And the line between asking and just accepting when the time comes is big and wide—ain't it!" Suspicion in the Younger family continues until the money is spent and all are once more striving for worthwhile goals.)

Action

3. How does Lena end the dissension?

(Lena, who is recently widowed, exerts her authority over the family by making a down payment on a small, sturdy three-bedroom house in Clybourne Park. The sudden investment has Ruth's approval. Lena joyfully announces the plan to Travis, who will one day inherit the house. To Walter Lee, she hesitantly explains that she took the initiative to keep the family from "falling to pieces in front of my eyes." She believes that extensive quarreling and undercutting of family members will destroy the Youngers, a fact corroborated by Ruth's intent to abort her unborn child.)

With the wisdom of a widow left to guide her family through hard times, Lena declares that life has to return to the positive. "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." To settle the undercurrent, she gives Walter Lee the remaining \$6,500 with instructions to place \$3,000 in the bank to cover Beneatha's college needs and the rest in checking. As a gesture of trust, she declares that the money will remain in Walter Lee's name.)

Motif

4. Why does marriage suffer in tense surroundings?

(The cramped quarters in a southside ghetto apartment and dead-end service jobs working for white people have oppressed Walter Lee and Ruth. She is tired of living so close to her in-laws and borrows five dollars to pay an abortionist to end her pregnancy so the family will not have to make room for another member. Walter Lee, who is unaware of the pregnancy, has sympathy only for himself. He declares that seeing his son sleep on the couch is demoralizing to a father who works as a chauffeur with no chance of finding a better job. Laden with anger and limitations on opportunity, the couple see no way toward a better future.)

Instead of blaming circumstance for the stalemate in their fortunes, the Youngers drift apart. Walter Lee allows frustration, sarcasm, and rage to threaten their relationship. The resulting tension overflows in harsh, cruel verbal jousts. Ruth dislikes his excessive drinking. Walter Lee criticizes her looks. He admits, "It's been rough . . . I guess between two people there ain't never as much understood as folks generally thinks there is. I mean like between me and you—How we gets to the place where we scared to talk softness to each other." He asks why they have reached this impasse. Ruth replies that she is confused and that the present misery affects her, too.)

Plot

5. What does Karl Lindner’s visit add to the Younger family’s troubles?

(Lindner introduces himself as a “representative of the Clybourne Park Improvement Association,” a euphemism for a committee of bigoted white residents who want to control the racial make-up of their neighborhood. Without expressing antipathy toward black neighbors, he claims that the community organization is set up to look after block upkeep and special projects. He adds that he attends to the needs of new people who enter the community and “sort of give them the lowdown on the way we do things out in Clybourne Park.” Walter Lee, Ruth, and Beneatha Younger listen to Lindner’s explanation. From the beginning, Beneatha seems aware of Lindner’s true purpose, which is to persuade the Youngers to change their minds about moving to the white neighborhood.

Lindner’s hypocritical subterfuge—polite talk about “trouble in this world” and people not willing to “sit down and talk to each other”—encourages Ruth, who agrees that people need more interaction to understand each other. His ingratiating comments about the Youngers being nice, hard working, and “honest I’m sure” bring a frown to Beneatha’s face. At the heart of his little speech comes the patronizing line that rationalizes racism: “Our Negro families are happier when they live in their own communities.” Both Beneatha and Walter realize the import of his words. After he broaches the subject of reimbursement, Beneatha suggests thirty pieces, the price in silver of Judas’s betrayal of Christ. Ruth responds, “Lord have mercy, ain’t this the living gall!”

At Lena’s return to the scene, the trio quickly report Lindner’s high-handed offer. Walter Lee’s delight in Mama’s firm intent to move results in teasing, humor, and joking about white people’s fears of violence and intermarriage with blacks. He breaks into a playful rendition of “I Got Wings.” He joins the others in presenting Lena a new set of garden tools and a hat, a gesture of faith that she will one day plant a garden as prolific and fruitful as her garden of children.)

Character Interaction

6. How does Beneatha relate to her two suitors? *(Beneatha displays aspirations and hopes through assessment of and interaction with two suitors, George Murchison and Joseph Asagai. In describing George, she says that he is handsome, drives a beautiful car, and takes her to nice places, but he’s shallow. Like Bennie, he studies at college, but seems more interested in making money than in broadening his mind. She concludes the picture with a summation of the Murchison family’s outlook: “The Murchisons are honest-to-God-real-live-rich colored people, and the only people in the world who are more snobbish than rich white people are rich colored people.”*

An aspect of George’s shallowness is his self-absorption and lack of scholarship. His adherence to white bucks, fraternity pin, and other aspects of campus fashion causes Walter Lee to ridicule him. Beneatha is more put out with George’s contempt for learning and for West African heritage. George dismisses reading books as a way “to learn facts—to get grades—to pass the course—to get a degree. That’s all—it has nothing to do with thoughts.” With an elaborate sneer, he insists, “Let’s face it, baby, your heritage is nothing but a bunch of raggedy-assed spirituals and some grass huts.”

A diametric opposite of George, Joseph Asagai is not materialistic, yet is no more right for Beneatha than is his rival. Joseph seems devoted to her, but his pretensions and unfounded criticisms of American life suggest that he takes himself too seriously. Joseph has come from Nigeria to study in America. In a foreign setting, he is quick to favor his Yoruba heritage over others. He dreams great things for his village and tentatively adds, “And perhaps . . . perhaps I will be a great man.” Without consulting Beneatha, he proposes to marry her, establish her in a Nigerian village as his trophy wife, and wipe out her aspirations and traditions as though they never existed.)

Analysis

7. What is the significance of the title?

(Lorraine Hansberry, a part of the post-Harlem Renaissance surge in black art, honors Langston Hughes, the foremost poet and critical influence of his day. She selects from his “Montage of a Dream Deferred” the image of the desiccated raisin in the sun. Hughes asks, “What happens to a dream deferred?” One answer is that it withers from the harsh, relentless atmosphere, producing the rage, bitterness, and frustration felt by Big Walter and his ambitious children after their dream appears permanently stalled. Mrs. Johnson, the stereotypical nosy neighbor, proposes another possibility: the dream may lead to violence when cultures clash over discrimination and bigotry. She has already envisioned in newspaper headlines the bombing of Clybourne Park.

Lorraine Hansberry deviates from Langston Hughes’s conclusion that the deferred dream is likely to preface an explosion. Because Walter Lee reaches a turning point and feels compelled to take action to rescue his family from poverty, he relies on poor judgment in planning to open a liquor store with an untrustworthy partner. The juxtaposition of the loss of his investment with Lindner’s offer of a bribe to give up the house in Clybourne Park gives Walter Lee a second opportunity to earn money by shady methods. To Lena’s delight, he chooses a third way out—by pursuing his mother’s dream of a small house for the family to enjoy and for Travis to inherit. Thus, the raisin may shrivel from its long exposure to racism, but it becomes sweeter in the long run, providing the Youngers with a long cherished dream of home ownership and autonomy.)

Symbolism

8. How does the houseplant symbolize Lena’s dream?

(Like Big Walter and his son and daughter, Lena has her own dream to nurture into fruition. The scraggly plant that lives on the only window sill and attempts to prosper on meager sunlight represents a living hope for the Younger family. With maternal affection, Lena refuses to give up on her children or her plant: “They spirited all right, my children. Got to admit they got spirit—Bennie and Walter. Like this little old plant that ain’t never had enough sunshine or nothing.”

On moving day, Lena considers her plant a valuable asset to the new house. Beneatha ridicules it as a “raggedy-looking old thing,” but Lena insists on propping it with sticks and string and protecting it from being jostled in the move. In similar fashion, she nourishes Walter Lee, propping his self-esteem by trusting him with \$6,500 of the family’s money and by allowing him to make mistakes. Her spiritual sunshine rescues him from despair and saves Ruth from destroying their baby. At the end of the play, Lena believes that Walter Lee has found his rainbow and entered fully into manhood.)

Theme

9. What generates the rage and bitterness common to the ghetto?

(In the microcosm of the Younger household, Lorraine Hansberry depicts family life in Chicago’s southside. Ruth represents the day worker who has no option but to labor as a domestic and watch her son Travis grow up without the dignity of a room of his own or a real bed to sleep in. Her mother-in-law, Lena Younger, shares womanly warmth and encouragement, but is unable to compensate for the burdens that freight Ruth’s spirit.

Walter Lee represents the second generation of dreamers. Like Lena’s husband, he struggles to provide for his family and feels trapped by a symbolic endless journey: “I open and close car doors all day long. I drive a man around in his limousine and I say, ‘Yes, sir; no, sir; very good, sir; shall I take the Drive, sir?’” Depressed by servility and phony courtesy, he feels robbed of worth, purpose, and youth. At age 35, he bristles with rage and resentment that no one appreciates his need to succeed. Willie’s betrayal leaves him empty and hopeless with no other outlets for his ambition.

Beneatha, who has fewer ties to the ghetto, is a surprising character. She has no wish to live like Lena and Ruth, but she also rejects the strutting materialism of George Murchison. An altruist, she wants to help people just as the doctor saved Rufus from a terrible head injury. However, she is not eager to jump into marriage with Joseph, who values her as a prized possession, a womanly object to place in his Nigerian village as a model of idealism, education, and submission to her husband. Bennie

opts instead to work even harder to attain a medical degree and become a doctor. The choice exemplifies Big Walter’s spirit and honors his choice of honest work as a means uplifting the Youngers.)

Character and Place Names

10. Discuss the choice of names in the play.
(Lorraine Hansberry’s selection of character and place names attest to a sensitivity to nuance in literature. The Younger family lives up to their patronym by remaining fresh, robust, and persistent, even when circumstance threatens to swamp them. Walter Lee bears a multiple burden: he is man of the house, a father to Travis, and the inheritor of Big Walter’s ambitions. As such, he deserves the name his father bore. Ruth, like the Biblical Ruth, is loyal to her mother-in-law, even though they are not blood kin. Ruth confides in Lena her spiritual and physical weariness and accepts Lena’s kindness.

Beneatha’s qualities suggest that Hansberry anticipated the feminist movement of the 1970s. Living “beneath” her brother’s contempt and chauvinism, she weathers ridicule for studying guitar and acting, buying camera equipment, and learning to ride horseback and risks a slap from Lena for taking the Lord’s name in vain. Rejecting the stereotypical female role, Bennie answers to a masculine nickname, one that links her with a strong drive to challenge her intellect and to succeed in the medical profession. Intent on empowering herself, she accepts the challenge to stop flitting from one interest to another and to find purpose and meaning in a profession.

The vision of the Younger clan leaning on Lena explains from the beginning their need for a strong, yet matronly head of the family. An old-fashioned matriarch, Lena accepts her late husband, Big Walter, for drinking, chasing women, and living in dreams. She chooses to see him with tear-filled eyes, bowed with grief at the loss of little Claude and lacerating himself for not lifting his family from poverty. Like the willow, Lena rides out the storm by acquiescing to external blows. At the end of Act II and the nadir of the family’s hopes, she twice calls on God for strength. She lends cheer and energy to the unpacking and chides herself from long in the past: “Lord, ever since I was a little girl, I always remembers people saying, “Lena—Lena Eggleston, you aims too high all the time. You needs to slow down and see life a little more like it is.” The choice of a maiden name implies the “egg” of ambition that Lena mothers despite setbacks.

With respect and admiration, Ruth intervenes and counters Lena’s decision to stay in the ghetto. Practical and determined, she moves Lena into a new day for black women. Not satisfied with living on the edge, Lene insists that four grown people can easily pay \$125 a month for a new house. The proposal works. Lena reminds her son that five generations of slaves and sharecroppers preceded her and that honest work is the answer)

How Language Works

Lorraine Hansberry gives her characters opportunities to express wisdom. For example:

1. Humorously, Walter Lee declares, "First thing a man ought to learn in life is not to make love to no colored woman first thing in the morning."
2. Walter later pleads, "A man needs for a woman to back him up."
3. Big Walter once said, "Seem like God didn't see fit to give the black man nothing but dreams."
4. Beneatha charges, "All the tyranny in the world will never put a God in the heavens!"
5. In defense of her children, Lena states, "When you starts measuring somebody, measure him right."

Across the Curriculum

Religion and Family Values

1. Contrast Nigerian tribal animism with the religious fundamentalism that Lena respects. Explain in a paragraph why Beneatha's sacrilege shocks her mother.
2. List the changes in home life the Youngers can expect in the new residence, for example, privacy, space, a yard, gardening, and pride in ownership along with disapproving stares from neighbors and passersby.
3. Express how Big Walter still influences his wife and children.

Art and Music

1. Draw flashcards or illustrated definitions containing examples of unfamiliar vocabulary, e.g., Pan-Africanism, NAACP, Ku Klux Klan, assimilationism, colonialism, heathenism, retrogression, entrepreneur, ofay, asagai, and Mistuh Charley.
2. Using dolls, puppets, art sketches, or mannequin poses, create a series of tableaux that display Beneatha's many dreams, including

becoming a Nigerian, doctor, artist, scholar, radical, and wife of George Murchison.

3. Study web pages that detail Hansberry's life and works. Design your own time line, critical essay, biography, or bibliography for an individual web page on the play or playwright.
4. Distribute copies of the words to "I Got Wings" and "No Ways Tired." Appoint a panel to discuss why Negro spirituals frequently describe fatigue from meaningless labor. Explain why black folk music and gospel music continue to have meaning for audiences who are better educated and more sophisticated than the anonymous slave era composers.

Geography

1. Mark maps of Africa with boundaries indicating these terms from the play: Yoruba, Nigeria, Songhay, Ashanti, Bantu, Liberia, Hereros, and Benin. Indicate which terms name tribes, language groups, and nations.
2. Compose a U.S. map shaded to identify the largest population of minorities. Include insets of cities containing large black ghettos, particularly Chicago, New York, Atlanta, Pittsburgh, Cleveland, Los Angeles, Detroit, Miami, New Orleans, Birmingham, and Washington, D. C.

Social Studies

1. Discuss the implications of Pan-Africanism and the Ku Klux Klan. How did racism hinder artists like Lorraine Hansberry? Why did some creative blacks, such as Zora Neale Hurston, Richard Wright, Malcolm X, Josephine Baker, James Baldwin, Maya Angelou, Paul Robeson, and Alex Haley, study black customs and artistic expression in foreign lands rather than in America? Which black artists, particularly Baldwin, Baker, and Robeson, preferred to be known as expatriates?
2. Compose a definition of white flight. Explain why communities like Clybourne Park often change dramatically from all-white to mostly minority ownership. Why is busing a significant boost in the balance of white and minority students attending public schools?

3. Account for the term “white-flight academy.”
4. Define assimilation as it applies to blacks who move to a better home or who seek education for a profession. Explain why Lena is a sensible anchor for both Travis and Beneatha.

Mathematics and Business

1. Explain the use of bribes in the launching of a business. Discuss how Walter Lee jeopardizes his family by dealing in cash and unsecured options. Suggest ways that Walter Lee can recover some of the money without resorting to violence.
2. Define these terms in the context of the play: entrepreneur, investment, license, spread some money around, crackers, fly-by-night proposition, my girl, tuition, on the take, Symbol of a Rising Class, Titan of the system, the takers, graft, residential property, block upkeep, liquor license, collective effort, and Chairman of the Board.
3. Explain how the availability of liquor contributes to the debilitation of black people living in ghettos.

Science and Health

1. Recreate Rufus’s injury and treatment to explain how Beneatha derived an interest in medicine.
2. Draw a cause-and-effect diagram explaining the importance of Booker T. Washington’s achievements to science and education.
3. Contrast the availability of illegal abortions in Hansberry’s time with the current status of safe, legal abortions and abortifacients like RU-486. List the major factors causing illness, infection, permanent handicap, or death in pregnant women, particularly diabetes, alcohol and drug addiction, AIDS, eclampsia, perforated uterus, uremic poisoning, or shock and hemorrhaging.

Literature and Stagecraft

1. List and identify on the chalkboard important allusions in the text, such as Prometheus, Garbo, Mrs. Miniver, Scarlett O’Hara, Colonel McCormick, Buckingham Palace, New World,

Springfield, Jacob’s kettle, Great White Father, “if the salt loses its savor,” and “prophets who would lead us out of the wilderness.”

2. Using desktop publishing, create a stage glossary of technical terms from the play. Include cast, director, producer, curtain, scene, act, at rise, aside, and blackout.
3. Read aloud the stage directions to Act I. Determine why Hansberry appears to be composing an introductory essay about family life. For whom is the introduction intended?
4. Read aloud from chapters in Alex Haley’s *The Autobiography of Malcolm X* detailing the seamy side of Harlem, especially illegal liquor, drugs, prostitution, street gangs, and petty crime. Determine how the Younger family protects Travis from the down side of the ghetto.
5. Summarize the final chapters of Richard Wright’s *Black Boy*. Explain how his view of flight from Tennessee to the North contrasts the Youngers’ move to Clybourne Park.

Language

1. Explain the humor and pathos of these terms from the story: Tarzan, peachy keen, ghettoitis, tooken, oldddd-d-fashioned-ddddd-Negroes, honest-to-God-real-live-rich-colored people, quiet desperation, raggedy-assed spirituals, Massa Charlie, tea-party interest, OCOMOGOSIAY, THE LION IS WAKING . . . OWIMOWEH!, and Great West African Heritage. Discuss the meaning of “Education has spoiled many a good plow hand.”
2. Compose an essay on the metaphor in Walter’s claim that “that money is made out of my father’s flesh.”
3. Use the poem on page 3 to create a dramatic or choral reading. Add lines from other writers of the Harlem Renaissance or modern black poets, particularly Sonia Sanchez, Jean Toomer, Nikki Giovanni, Claude McKay, Rita Dove, Paul Laurence Dunbar, Gwendolyn Brooks, Mari Evans, Walter Dean Myers, and Zora Neale Hurston.

History

1. Make a time line of black African history. Name and describe important figures, including Chaka and Jomo Kenyatta, and such civilizations as the Songhay dynasty. Add historical figures since Hansberry's day, especially Nelson Mandela, Winnie Mandela, Steven Biko, Desmond Tutu, and Mark Mathebane.

Education

1. Compose a worksheet of exercises suited to uneducated adults that will teach writing skills, history and geography, and civics. Center your choices on terms and concepts that educated people should know if they want to compete for good jobs, make the most of social opportunities, pursue the arts, run for office, elect sympathetic government officials, or invest in business.

Composition

1. Compare the work of Lorraine Hansberry with that of other famous women who have tried to lift black people out of slavery, poverty, discrimination, and oppression, e. g., Sojourner Truth, Harriet Tubman, Ida Wells-Barnett, Shirley Chisholm, Barbara Jordan, Faye Wattleton, Anita Hill, Marcia Gillespie, Alice Walker, or Johnetta Cole. Explain why the feminist movement is an integral part of civil rights.
2. Compose a scene in which the Younger family meets hospitable neighbors in Clybourne Park. Indicate how Beneatha, Ruth, Lena, Travis, and Walter Lee return the gesture, for example, with home-cooked food or flowers or vegetables from their garden.
3. Summarize the lifestyles of these figures: Joseph Asagai, George Murchison, Mrs. Johnson, Mr. Arnold, Bobo, Willy, Beneatha, "Big Walter," Ruth, Lena, Walter Lee, and Travis Younger. Contrast the hopes and aspirations of each person. include the change in Beneatha after she turns down a proposal of marriage and decides to go to medical school.
4. Summarize aspects of ghetto life that oppress the Younger family. Describe sharing a bath-

room, sleeping in the living room on the couch, scraping up money for public transportation, working as a domestic, driving another man's luxury car, planning on squeezing another child into a crowded apartment, killing roaches, and hanging out at the Green Hat.

5. Write a short note to one of the major characters expressing your concerns about the move. State your feelings about the safety of one minority family in a white community. Suggest ways of coping with loneliness, isolation, lawlessness, and overt snobbery and hostility.
6. Write a theme on womanhood as it applies to Mrs. Johnson, Lena, or Ruth. What difficulties do these women face in establishing families in a tenement?

Alternate Assessment

1. List lines that describe the grief, poverty, vermin, insufficient education, family tensions, lack of job opportunities, violence, crime, and hopelessness that assault the Younger family.
2. Discuss how Lena Younger copes with family problems.
3. Compose a scene in which Ruth gives birth to a daughter.
4. Make a character list and explain the attitude of each toward self-fulfillment. Mention Joseph Asagai, Mrs. Johnson, Bennie, Travis, Walter Lee, Lena, George Murchison, Big Walter, and Lindner.
5. Add yourself as a character to the play, perhaps as a neighbor, doctor, employer, friend, or police officer. Enter several crucial scenes and speak your point of view about the family's intentions to spend the insurance money.

Vocabulary

Complete the paragraphs below with synonyms for the underlined words chosen from the list that follows. Note that you will have answers left over when you finish.

accommodate, afterthought, aggressiveness, contradictions, disguise, disheveled, disinterested, doilies, drily, dusky, erratic, furnishings, graft, indestructible, indictment, insofar, lease, make-down, pretenses, primary, proposition, quip, rigidity, refrain, repetitive, rousing, self-righteous, slur, sole, surly, undistinguished, uniformity, unobtrusively, upholstery, vengeance, vindicated

The Younger living room would be a comfortable and well-ordered room if it were not for a number of unconquerable (1) _____ denials (2) _____ to this state of being. Its equipages (3) _____ are typical and ordinary (4) _____ and their main (5) _____ feature now is that they had clearly had to oblige (6) _____ the living of too many people for too many years and they are tired. Still, we can see that at some time, a time probably no longer remembered by the family (except perhaps for Mama), the furnishings of this room were actually selected with care and love and even hope—and brought to this apartment and arranged with taste and pride.

That was a long time ago. Now the once loved pattern of the couch covering (7) _____ has to fight to show itself from under acres of crocheted mats (8) _____ 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 hide (9) _____ the worn places in the carpet; but the carpet has fought back by showing its weariness, with depressing sameness (10) _____, elsewhere on its surface.

Weariness has, in fact, won in this room. Everything has been polished, washed, sat on, used, scrubbed too often. All intents (11) _____ but living itself have long since vanished from the very atmosphere of this room.

Moreover, a section of this room, for it is not really a room unto itself, though the landlord's contract (12) _____ would make it seem so, slopes backward to provide a small kitchen area, where the family prepares the meals that are eaten in the living room proper, which must also serve as dining room. The single window that has been provided for these "two" rooms is located in this kitchen area. The lone (13) _____ natural light the family may enjoy in the course of a day is only that which fights its way through this little window.

At left, a door leads to a bedroom which is shared by Mama and her daughter, Beneatha. At right, opposite, is a second room (which in the beginning of the life of this apartment was probably a breakfast room) which serves as a bedroom for Walter and his wife, Ruth.

Time: Sometime between World War II and the present.

Place: Chicago's southside

At Rise: It is morning dark in the living room. Travis is asleep on the folding (14) _____ bed at center. An alarm clock sounds from within the bedroom at right, and presently Ruth enters from that room and closes the door behind her. She crosses sleepily toward the window. As she passes her sleeping son she reaches down and shakes him a little. At the window she raises the shade and a dark (15) _____ southside morning light comes in feebly.

Comprehension Test A

Part I: Matching (30 points)

Match the following descriptions with characters. Choose your answers from the list of characters below. You may use some of the answers more than once and some not at all.

- | | |
|------------------------------------------------------|---------------------|
| _____ 1. threatens to hire a new man | A. Rufus |
| _____ 2. fails to meet Bobo at the station | B. Mrs. Johnson |
| _____ 3. dreams of having a servant named Jefferson | C. Joseph Asagai |
| _____ 4. needs five dollars to pay an abortionist | D. Claude |
| _____ 5. predicts that Clybourne Park will be bombed | E. Travis |
| _____ 6. anticipates being punished for disobedience | F. Ruth |
| _____ 7. wears fashionable campus clothes | G. Mrs. Miniver |
| _____ 8. gives Bennie a toque | H. Lena |
| _____ 9. refuses to allow sacrilege | I. Big Walter |
| _____ 10. cut his face while sledding | J. Lindner |
| _____ 11. represents homeowners | K. George Murchison |
| _____ 12. died in childhood | L. Walter Lee |
| _____ 13. believes Walter Lee has become a man | M. Bobo |
| _____ 14. orders the moving men to be careful | N. Mrs. Arnold |
| _____ 15. gets drunk and dances to African music | O. Willy |

Part II: Identification (10 points)

Explain the significance of the following details:

1. plant
2. Claude
3. Green Hat
4. insecticide
5. "She"

Comprehension Test A (Page 2)

Part III: Fact/Opinion (30 points)

Mark each statement either T for true, F for false, or O for opinion. Justify your answer on the line that follows:

_____ 1. Lena has reason to mourn Ruth's abortion.

_____ 2. Beneatha fights with her brother because he wastes her tuition.

_____ 3. Ruth grieves that she is 35 years old and worthless because her son has no room or bed of his own.

_____ 4. The Arnolds make Walter Lee feel inferior.

_____ 5. Buying a liquor license with bribes is graft.

_____ 6. Mrs. Johnson thinks the gardening hat makes Lena look like Mrs. Miniver.

_____ 7. Chicago's southside has no decent housing for blacks.

_____ 8. The move to Clybourne Park will fulfill Big Walter's dream.

_____ 9. Lindner's offer forces all the Youngers to reconsider moving into a white neighborhood.

_____ 10. By working together, the Youngers can achieve their goals.

Part IV: Essay Questions (30 points)

1. Account for Walter Lee's suffocation in his job.
2. Explain why Beneatha rejects marriage.
3. Describe Lindner's attempt to persuade the Youngers to give up their move to Clybourne Park.
4. Summarize the change that comes over Walter Lee during the play.
5. Describe from Travis's view the family's hopes for advancement.

Comprehension Test B

Part I: Setting Identification (20 points)

Identify the items or places that fit the following descriptions. Select your answers from the list that follows.

Asagai, assimilationism, Benin, Big Walter, Claude, Clybourne Park, crackers, doilies, entrepreneur, fraternity pin, God, graft, Green Hat, Lake Michigan, Liberia, license, make-down bed, Mr. Barnett, Mrs. Johnson, Nigeria, \$6,500, sled, South Center, southside, Springfield, steel mills, sweet potato pie, taxi, \$10,000, toque, \$3,500, white bucks, Wisconsin

- _____ 1. gets a rat with a stick
- _____ 2. calls Bennie a Yoruba name
- _____ 3. is a nation founded by slaves
- _____ 4. works in mysterious ways
- _____ 5. is vehicle on which Rufus is injured
- _____ 6. are racists
- _____ 7. feels that their whole way of life is threatened
- _____ 8. is a requirement for the liquor store
- _____ 9. is a down payment
- _____ 10. is a ghetto

Part II: Fill-in (30 points)

Fill in the blanks with answers which complete each statement.

- 1. Walter Lee refers to the lost money as "my father's _____."
- 2. Ruth is surprised that Bennie won't marry _____.
- 3. _____ says that food is all she has to give Walter Lee.
- 4. Asagai accuses Bennie of mutilating her _____.
- 5. George calls assimilationist Negroes _____.
- 6. _____ flaunts the fact that curtain time in New York is 8:40.
- 7. Walter Lee thinks of himself as a _____ surrounded by ants.
- 8. _____ said that "Education has spoiled many a good plow hand."
- 9. Walter likes the man with the conked head who blows a _____.
- 10. _____ wept because he believed that black people's dreams didn't come true.
- 11. Walter envisions Travis sitting among _____ while selecting a school.
- 12. Ruth buys _____ on sale at the South Center.
- 13. At the new house, Ruth plans to sit in the _____.
- 14. When the New Negroes hold a convention, Walter Lee wants to chair the Committee on Unending _____.
- 15. Lena uses cord and sticks to protect her _____.

Comprehension Test B (Page 2)

Part III: Multiple Choice (20 points)

Choose a correct answer to complete each statement. Place the letter of your response in the blank provided at left.

- _____ 1. Beneatha suggests that the price for giving up Clybourne Park
 - A. is too high for the Youngers.
 - B. will use up the whole insurance check.
 - C. should be thirty pieces and not a coin less.
 - D. is acting like old-fashioned Negroes.

- _____ 2. By spending days at the Green Hat,
 - A. Walter Lee jeopardizes his job.
 - B. Bobo fails to meet Willy.
 - C. Ruth learns where to seek an abortion.
 - D. Willy discovers how to "spread around" the trio's money.

- _____ 3. Joseph Asagai questions dreams that
 - A. require moving to a cracker neighborhood.
 - B. depend on the death of a man.
 - C. make black people compare themselves to whites.
 - D. carry the dreamer in a circle.

- _____ 4. Rufus's accident
 - A. forces Travis to take a taxi to school.
 - B. ends with a small scar.
 - C. forces Beneatha to give up plans to be a doctor.
 - D. causes Ruth to praise God.

- _____ 5. Beneatha ridicules her brother as
 - A. a chauffeur for the Arnolds.
 - B. a 35-year-old failure.
 - C. OCOMOGOSIAY.
 - D. a Titan of the system.

- _____ 6. Ruth conceals from her husband
 - A. that she would like to go to the movies and hold hands.
 - B. her pregnancy.
 - C. Claude's death.
 - D. the phone call from Mrs. Arnold.

- _____ 7. Mrs. Johnson envisions
 - A. a bombing at Clybourne Park.
 - B. Beneatha in a Nigerian robe and toque.
 - C. the landlord spraying for roaches.
 - D. a bathroom belonging to the Youngers.

- _____ 8. Walter Lee declares that colored women are
 - A. evil people at 8:00 in the morning.
 - B. better off than a man who must drive a rich man's car.
 - C. not welcome by Lindner's committee.
 - D. more interested in their West African heritage than are colored men.

- _____ 9. Lena believes that blacks don't know anything about Africa except
 - A. assimilationism.
 - B. some raggedy-assed spirituals.
 - C. Tarzan.
 - D. what they learn from missionaries.

- _____ 10. Lena sends Travis to
 - A. look for Mr. Lindner's card.
 - B. call Dr. Jones for Ruth.
 - C. tell George Murchison that Beneatha will be late.
 - D. borrow cleanser from Mrs. Johnson

Part IV: Essay Questions (40 points)

Explain the significance of the following quotations:

- 1. What happens to a dream deferred?
- 2. He's ashamed of his heritage.
- 3. I experiment with different forms of expression.
- 4. When do you think is the time to love somebody the most; when they done good and made things easy for everybody? Well then, you ain't through learning—because that ain't the time at all. It's when he's at his lowest and can't believe in hisself 'cause the world done whipped him so.
- 5. But you've got to admit that a man, right or wrong, has the right to want to have the neighborhood he lives in a certain kind of way.

Answer Key

VOCABULARY

- | | | |
|--------------------|----------------|---------------|
| 1. indestructible | 6. accommodate | 11. pretenses |
| 2. contradictions | 7. upholstery | 12. lease |
| 3. furnishings | 8. doilies | 13. sole |
| 4. undistinguished | 9. disguise | 14. make-down |
| 5. primary | 10. uniformity | 15. dusky |

COMPREHENSION TEST A

Part I: Matching (30 points)

- | | | |
|------|-------|-------|
| 1. N | 6. E | 11. J |
| 2. O | 7. K | 12. D |
| 3. L | 8. C | 13. H |
| 4. F | 9. H | 14. H |
| 5. B | 10. A | 15. L |

Part II: Identification (10 points)

1. Lena nurtures a failing house plant just as she nurtures her family and her husband's dreams.
2. Big Walter grieves for his son "little Claude," who died in childhood.
3. Lounge where Walter Lee spends his time while taking off from work.
4. One of the Youngers' regular Saturday chores is spraying insecticide to kill roaches in the cracks in the walls.
5. Ruth inadvertently gives away her visit to an abortionist by referring to Dr. Jones as "she."

Part III: Fact/Opinion (30 points)

- | | |
|------|-------|
| 1. F | 6. F |
| 2. T | 7. O |
| 3. F | 8. T |
| 4. O | 9. F |
| 5. T | 10. O |

Answers will vary.

COMPREHENSION TEST B

Part I: Setting Identification (20 points)

- | | |
|----------------|-------------------|
| 1. Mr. Barnett | 6. crackers |
| 2. Asagai | 7. Clybourne Park |
| 3. Liberia | 8. license |
| 4. God | 9. \$3,500 |
| 5. sled | 10. southside |

Part II: Fill-In (30 points)

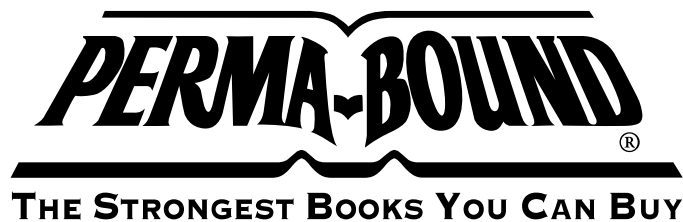
- | | |
|-------------------------|----------------|
| 1. flesh | 9. sax |
| 2. George | 10. Big Walter |
| 3. Ruth | 11. catalogues |
| 4. hair | 12. curtains |
| 5. Uncle Toms | 13. tub |
| 6. George | 14. Agitation |
| 7. giant | 15. plant |
| 8. Booker T. Washington | |

Part III: Multiple Choice (20 points)

- | | |
|------|-------|
| 1. C | 6. B |
| 2. A | 7. A |
| 3. B | 8. A |
| 4. B | 9. C |
| 5. D | 10. D |

Part IV: Quotation Explanation (30 points)

Answers will vary.



Perma-Bound

617 East Vandalia Road • Jacksonville, Illinois 62650
Toll Free 1-800-637-6581 • Fax 1-800-551-1169
E-Mail: books@perma-bound.com

Perma-Bound Canada

Box 868, Station Main • Peterborough, Ontario K9J 7A2
Toll Free 1-800-461-1999 • Fax 1-888-250-3811
E-Mail: perma-bound.ca@sympatico.ca

Visit us online at www.perma-bound.com