



Exploring Senior Cycle Texts

A Raisin in the Sun by Lorraine Hansberry

A Raisin in the Sun by Lorraine Hansberry is a drama included as part of the Prescribed Material for the Leaving Certificate English Examination in 2026 and 2027. It may be used as the Single Text at Ordinary Level or as part of the Comparative at Ordinary Level or Higher Level.

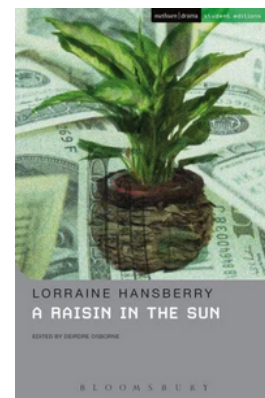


Image courtesy of
Methuen

Please note:

- The following tasks might be completed over a series of lessons.
- You may like to adapt and adjust the tasks to suit your context.
- *A Raisin in the Sun* covers themes which could be considered sensitive or controversial. You may wish to consult with our READY Framework to support you in your study.



Scan the QR code or [click here](#)
to access a **Getting Started with**
Guide for this Text

Before you read... (Teacher Guidance)

These activities encourage students to reflect on personal and collective dreams, explore the cultural context of 1950s Chicago, and consider how individual aspirations connect to wider social realities. Adapt as appropriate for your class.

1. Discuss and Reflect on Personal Dreams

Facilitate a class discussion on students' own dreams and goals for the future. Use a collaborative tool (e.g. Wooclap, Mentimeter) or a physical map board to capture individual contributions. Guide students in identifying recurring themes and prompt reflection on shared values or challenges.

2. Listen, Reflect and Create

Play a recording of Langston Hughes' poem Harlem, which serves as the play's epigraph. Lead a class discussion or debate on the motion: "Does society have a responsibility to help individuals achieve their dreams?"

Invite students to respond creatively by composing a short poem, spoken-word piece, or rap beginning with "What happens to a dream deferred?"

[Click to listen to
a performance of
the poem Harlem
by Langston
Hughes on
Youtube.](#)



3. Considering Cultural Context

Support students in co-creating an interactive digital timeline of key events in 1950s Chicago and the lives of its Black inhabitants. Recommended tools include Padlet or Sutori, though this can also be achieved on a shared class space. Use the activity to establish historical and social context for the play.



Extract

A Raisin in the Sun

Background to the play:

Background: This extract is taken from Act One, Scene Two of the play *A Raisin in the Sun* by Lorraine Hansberry. The play is set in an impoverished tenement in Chicago in the 1950s and portrays the lives of a black family as they chase personal dreams while struggling against poverty, prejudice and social constraints. In this scene, Walter and his Mother disagree over the role of money and wealth in their lives.

WALTER (Quietly) 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 - a big, looming blank space - full of nothing. Just waiting for me. But it don't have to be. (Pause. Kneeling beside her chair) Mama - 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 -

MAMA Son - how come you talk so much 'bout money? WALTER (With immense passion) Because it is life, Mama! MAMA (Quietly) Oh - (Very quietly) So now it's life. Money is life. Once upon a time freedom used to be life - now it's money. I guess the world really do change ...

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

MAMA No ... something has changed. (She looks at him) You something new, boy. In my time we was worried about not 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 'bout 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 streetcar - You my children - but how different we done become.

(Lorraine Hansberry, A Raisin in the Sun, 1959, p. 53)

Activities Based on Extract (Teacher Guidance)

The following questions may be based on the extract included or form part of your extended study of the novel. Students may like to complete the activities individually or collaboratively.

1. Script Surgery

- Guide students in a discussion of the author's use of vernacular or colloquial language in the extract. How does it make the dialogue feel authentic or true to life?
- Encourage paired reading of the scene, with each student playing a character while ignoring the stage directions. Then perform it a second time in pairs emphasising the stage directions.
- As a group, discuss the impact this has on how we view the characters and the action.
- Students may like to write a piece analysing the impact of stage directions on the extract.



2. Language Insights

- Lead a discussion with students on the role language plays in the scene. Draw attention to the author's use of vernacular or colloquial language and explore how this makes the dialogue feel more authentic and believable.
- Ask students to rewrite a short passage of the script in standard English, removing contractions and phonetic spellings. Then, facilitate a follow-up discussion on what is gained (e.g., clarity, accessibility) and what is lost (e.g., voice, cultural authenticity, rhythm) through this change.
- Assign students a short written response in which they examine how the use of language in the extract highlights aspects such as cultural identity, social class, or generational differences between the two characters.

3. Setting and Character

- Guide students in exploring how Walter and Mama are shaped by their social and cultural context. Encourage them to consider historical, social, and cultural influences on the characters' lives and choices.
- Set a written exercise in which students compare and contrast Walter and Mama. Prompt them to consider both similarities and differences in outlook, values, and experiences.

Reflect and Respond (Teacher Guidance)

The following questions may be based on the extract included or form part of your extended study of the novel. Students may like to complete the activities individually or collaboratively.

Conscience Alley

1. Focus Question: Present the question, "Should Walter put all his hopes into money in seeking the American Dream?" and ask students for an initial personal response.
2. Activity Setup: Display an image of Walter. Have each student write a warning for him, considering Mama's perspective and their own views, then share aloud in a "conscience alley" format.
3. Debrief: Lead a reflection on how the activity reveals Walter's inner conflict.

Making Comparisons

1. Listening Task: Play Langston Hughes' poem Harlem and prompt students to discuss its connections with Walter and Mama's dialogue in the extract.
2. Comparative Writing: Assign a short comparative essay responding to one of these prompts:
 - Our dreams can push us forward or torment us if unfulfilled.
 - The freedom to pursue dreams should be extended to all.

Letter to a Dream

1. Writing Task: Ask students to write a letter addressed to one of their dreams, goals, or hopes. Encourage them to personify it (e.g. "To the dream I left behind...").
2. Guidance: Students may describe the dream, its inspiration, and reflect on whether it has been achieved and how it feels to look back on it.

Personal Writing

1. Writing Prompt: Instruct students to describe a moment when a family member sacrificed something for them, or when they made a sacrifice in return.
2. Reflection: Encourage them to consider how this shaped their relationship or their understanding of love and responsibility.