

DramaWorks Teacher's Guide  
for  
A Raisin in the Sun  
the play by Lorraine Hansberry

Guide by  
Marion B. Hoffman  
William L. Hoffman

Copyright 1998, 2015  
Teacher's Pet Publications  
All Rights Reserved

No portion of this Guide may be posted on the Internet for any reason  
without written permission from  
Teacher's Pet Publications.  
Violators are subject to a *at least* a \$500.00 fine.

### **Authors' Dedication**

This guide is gratefully dedicated  
to all the classroom teachers  
without whom we would not be  
the lifelong students we are today.

We thank you.

*--Marion & Bill*

### **Publisher's Dedication**

Marion Hoffman was my teacher and friend  
who had a passion for learning and teaching  
and a tremendous love of literature and life.

Her spirited enthusiasm for teaching  
and her classroom experience combined with  
Bill's equally passionate love for and experience  
with the world of theater combined to make  
these DramaWorks guides invaluable resources.

I dedicate these updated editions to  
Marion and Bill.

*--Mary Collins, Founder of Teacher's Pet Publications*

# Table of Contents

*DramaWorks Teacher's Guide to  
A Raisin in the Sun*

	<b>Introduction To The DramaWorks Guide</b>
5	What DramaWorks Is
6	Who The DramaWorks Guide Is For
7	What The DramaWorks Guide Contains
10	How To Use The DramaWorks Guide
11	What The DramaWorks Guide Is Not
12	<b>About The Playwright And Her Art</b>
14	<b>A Synopsis Of A Raisin in the Sun</b>
19	<b>Learning And Teaching</b>
20	How To Read The Play
24	The Plot Of The Play
30	The Characters Of The Play
43	Some Thematic Ideas For Discussion
50	The Costuming, The Props, And The Set
53	<b>Using Vocabulary Words From The Text</b>
75	<b>Sections Of The Text For Close Examination</b>
97	<b>The Written Word</b>
99	Writing From Personal Experience
102	Writing From Research
105	Writing From Interviews
108	<b>The Exercises</b>
109	Improvisations
116	Presentations
124	Acting
136	<b>More And More Activities</b>
142	<b>Teacher Organizers</b>
142	Pedagogical Methods 1-5
145	<b>The Epilogue</b>

# Introduction to the DramaWorks Guide

## What DramaWorks Is

DramaWorks has been created to meet the needs of classroom teachers. We have found that many teachers want resource materials directly related to presenting dramatic literature in their classrooms. They want information for themselves about specific plays, help in teaching the plays in the classroom, a large selection of in- and out-of-class activities geared to students working at different learning levels, and some practical guidance in putting all of that material together as quickly and as effortlessly as possible for applied use.

In response to those needs, we have created DramaWorks. It is designed, in a single guide, to give teachers a working understanding of a play, in this instance *A Raisin in the Sun*, a high level of comfort in making an interesting and informative presentation of the play to their students, and numerous activities of varying kinds that can be done in class or at home. All activities come with information for the teacher as well as directions for the students. The directions are so flexible that the teacher can copy them and hand them out to the students, can give them out orally, or can adapt them to a variety of different purposes.

The activities include vocabulary exercises that focus on application of the words; classroom presentations; close examination of specially chosen parts of the text; acting exercises; writing assignments for the personal, interview, and research paper; and improvisations. There are, in addition, many suggested extra activities that allow students to practice skills in gathering and thinking about information, presenting information verbally, working with various media, and writing information in a variety of forms. Students also are encouraged to try to learn new skills such as the elements of acting.

Accompanying those materials are very practical suggestions for ways to allot classroom time for direct teaching, interactive discussions, and assigned activities, as well as ways to use out-of-class activities to the best advantage in furthering students' understanding and enjoyment of the play. Everything is presented in ways that conserve the teacher's time and at the same time capitalize on every opportunity to make the classroom interesting and dynamic. Many opportunities are given to actually "act out" parts of the play in class.

What is unique about DramaWorks is that it places emphasis on classroom teaching, discussion, and activity. We hope it gives teachers the confidence to create a dynamic, interactive classroom environment. We know it will help them to introduce *A Raisin in the Sun* to their students with minimal preparation but maximal results.

Because DramaWorks actually teaches users about the play while coaching them in teaching their students, it requires relatively little additional preparation time. There is no need to put hours and hours into creating lengthy lesson plans from scratch. Teachers can simply pick and choose from among many pre-designed activities without having to create new ones or devise lengthy instructions for their students.

## Who The DramaWorks Guide Is For

DramaWorks can be used by any busy teacher who wants to introduce drama into the classroom. The most obvious users are probably teaching English, although they might be in another of the humanities or in some area of language arts. Our teachers enjoy teaching and being with young people. They are likely to be relatively new teachers looking for some support while they gain experience, although they could easily be ten- or fifteen-year veterans looking for help in preparing to teach a new play or one they haven't taught for a while.

What we know for sure is that this guide will be used by teachers who believe it will enhance their teaching of *A Raisin in the Sun* while saving them some much-needed time in preparation. We hope our teachers see great value in teaching drama dramatically. Though they probably are teaching drama as part of an overall curriculum, we hope they want to go beyond acquainting students with the play in the same way that they would "read" a novel, poem, or short story. Good teachers know through experience that the only true way to understand drama is to see at least some of it acted out before our eyes. They know that hearing actors' voices, watching characters move, seeing costumes, and looking at sets--even in the imagination--will make more of an impression on students than a million words on a page.

Our teachers also want to introduce theatre into the classroom to acquaint their students with great works of drama and help them to understand their plots, language, characters, and ideas. Our teachers want to make their classroom presentations interesting. They want to keep the attention of their students and impress upon them some of the pleasure of learning that brought the teachers into the classroom in the first place. They know there is no better way to capture and keep students' attention than through the natural dynamics of drama.

Our teachers also know that drama is one way to open students' eyes to an understanding of real life. If students understand the motivations of a play's characters, they will be better armed to see the motivations of people they meet in their own lives. If they see models of both trustworthy and untrustworthy behavior, they will be able to make more informed decisions about how they view the behavior of others and about how they themselves behave. If they understand more about language and other historical periods and have discussed some new ideas, students will perhaps be just a little more prepared to live their lives in ways that will give them satisfaction.

## What The DramaWorks Guide Contains

The DramaWorks guide contains several sections.

The first section is **About the Playwright and Her Art**, which contains a brief write-up on the life and art of Lorraine Hansberry.

Next is **A Synopsis of *A Raisin in the Sun*** that both teachers and students may use to gain a quick and easy understanding of the overall plot of the play. Although some teachers may object to giving students notes on the plot of the play because doing so seems somehow like “cheating,” we believe that it is very helpful to students to refer to. But, as with all of the parts of the Guide, teachers get to make the decision as to which parts to use and which not.

In the section entitled **Learning and Teaching**, really the heart of the Guide, teachers will learn about *A Raisin in the Sun* at the same time that they gain techniques for teaching the play to their students. There is information on choosing a good text, reading the play for enjoyment and for teaching preparation, considerable information about the play’s characters, plot, thematic ideas, costuming, props, and set, and interesting and informative ways to present those aspects of drama to students. Throughout this section, we talk with teachers and share our thoughts on each part of *A Raisin in the Sun*.

Also included in **Learning and Teaching** are ways to act out parts of the play in the classroom using the sketchiest of props, sets, and costumes or no props, sets, or costumes at all. If teachers want to use the acting portions of the Guide, then the ideas in props, sets, and costumes will be very beneficial.

Throughout the **Learning and Teaching** section, teachers will find many casual suggestions for activities that can be used with students at varying learning levels. What **Learning and Teaching** really is is a section of coaching for the teacher. As educators with many years of experience in a variety of settings with lots of different students, we try to give teachers as many ideas as possible for ways to learn about the play and to pass that learning along to their students in as dynamic and informative a way as possible. By combining their own ideas and methodology with ours, teachers will create a vast assortment of ideas, approaches, and teaching techniques.

And that brings us to an important note: we don’t propose that our suggestions are the **only** way(s) to teach this or any other play. As teachers approach *A Raisin in the Sun* and other dramas, they will no doubt add notes, thoughts, and activities that will change their teaching over the years. What **Learning and Teaching** represents is a beginning, a variety of ways to approach *A Raisin in the Sun* that we believe will be successful in many classrooms.

Following the **Learning and Teaching** section are a series of more formally presented activities. Some may be done with students at varying learning levels while others require substantially capable and interested students.

**Vocabulary Words from the Text** is designed to make students more familiar with the meanings of over 100 words from the play's text. Each word is quoted as it is used in *A Raisin in the Sun* and is accompanied by a clear dictionary definition. Students apply the words in interesting ways to assist them in understanding and becoming more familiar with them. Some of these activities may be done individually at home and some may be done in pairs and small groups in class.

The part called **Sections of the Text for Close Examination** gives students ways of acquiring better understanding of the play by focusing closely on parts of scenes. By looking closely at small segments of text, students will be better able to understand and assimilate the play's characters, plot, and major ideas. The **Sections of the Text for Close Examination** lend themselves either to individual or group work and should be approached as a fun activity, if at all possible..

**The Written Word** is included for teachers who are most comfortable with evaluating students through traditional writing assignments. There are multiple suggestions for writing based on personal experience, writing that evolves from investigation and research, and writing based on interviews. The writing itself is an individualized activity done by students either in or outside of the classroom, but in the interest of time, we assume that most of the writing will be completed at home.

**The Exercises** are of three types. Some ask for investigation followed by a classroom presentation. And because we are learning about drama, other exercises involve creating theatrical improvisations and presenting them in class while still others give students the opportunity to act out parts of the play in class with or without costumes, props, and sets. Some of the exercises can be done individually while some are group activities. The section was created to give teachers a wide choice of each type of activity.

**The Exercises** is a section that can be used in its entirety, in part, or not at all. Although we hope that teachers will use some of the activities in the section, it is entirely possible to teach *A Raisin in the Sun* interestingly and successfully without doing the exercises at all. Regardless of how they are used, it is unlikely that any classroom teacher will have the luxury of enough class periods to use the entire **Exercises** section.

One of the last sections is called **More and More Activities**, which includes a list of extra activities that teachers might want to consider. There are fifty activities listed. Many of them have multiple parts. All told, there probably are more than seventy-five activities in the section.

We conclude with **The Epilogue** and a note on the text.

Every activity section contains **Suggestions For The Teacher** which—depending on the type of activity--gives teachers ideas about how to work with the activities, information about why we chose the particular activity, what we hope it will accomplish with students, and things for teachers to think about as they assign the work. Although we make practical suggestions on ways to teach the activities, we always leave all final decisions to teachers because they know their particular students, classrooms, and schools better than anyone else can.

For every series of activities and most individual activities, we offer **Directions For The Students**, which gives guidance about how to complete the activity, how to approach it, and what we hope will be learned from it. We have tried to assure that the directions are very informative but always supportive of teachers. Our desire is that our directions never encroach upon teachers' freedom to use the activities in any way that they please.

As teachers give directions for an activity, they will give students whatever information they think is needed. If they think in some cases that just giving students our directions and letting them get started on the activity is appropriate, that is fine. Students often will be able to do the work by just referring to Directions for Students. When teachers want additional information in making assignments, they will find the basis for it in the Suggestions for the Teacher sections.

## How To Use The DramaWorks Guide

We want teachers to feel free to use the DramaWorks Guide however they choose. But we also understand that teachers are busy people who don't always have time to wade through pages of information and then make hundreds of choices about how to present the material to their students.

We suggest, then, that teachers spend as much time as possible reading the play and the Guide. Then, if they want some practical applications of the material, they will find those under **Teaching Organizers**. In that section are a variety of ways to organize the actual teaching of *A Raisin in the Sun*. In the **Organizers**, we break the teaching of the play into relevant parts and suggest pedagogical methods.

All five methods require that the teacher start by giving an overview of what will be taught during the whole unit and how the teaching will be done. Generally, too, teachers will want to be sure that students understand their expectations. We suggest that copies of the synopsis of *A Raisin in the Sun* be given to students prior to the first class.

Our pedagogical methods are all based on fifteen class periods of approximately 50 minutes each. If teachers have more or fewer than fifteen class periods to devote to the play, they will necessarily need to adapt the **Organizers** to their own purposes.

Teachers may find these **Organizers** helpful time savers, especially if they are preparing to teach *A Raisin in the Sun* for the first time. Some users of the Guide may even be teaching their first play ever. But if teachers know ways that help them to present the material more effectively, then they should do it in whatever way seems best to them. The **Organizers** are presented as a way to save the teachers time. They are meant to help teachers, not dictate to them.

What is special about the DramaWorks Guide is that it has been created to be used by a variety of teachers in a variety of ways. We assume that all teachers and all classes and all classrooms are different. We invite teachers to use all or parts of the Guide exactly as we present them. But we also urge teachers to modify the Guide in any way that they please whenever they see the need.

Every step we have taken in creating the DramaWorks Guide was chosen to make teachers' professional and personal lives easier. It's not, after all, as though teachers can't present dramatic literature without our help. But if we do some of the work for them, they will have more time to think about presenting information to their students, working with them in groups and individually, and seeing that the classroom experience is as valuable as possible for everyone.

## What The DramaWorks Guide Is Not

We are not trying to give a synopsis of everything that has ever been written about *A Raisin in the Sun*. There is no way that anyone could do that. We are not writing an academic critique of the play. There are lots of journals available if that's what teachers want and need. We aren't trying to compile the latest literary criticism on the play. Again, that information is readily available.

We're not trying to make teachers instant experts on either *A Raisin in the Sun* or Lorraine Hansberry. If teachers choose to spend a lot of time researching Hansberry and her plays, there is sufficient information for them to choose from.

The DramaWorks Guide is not intended to be the final word on any aspect of *A Raisin in the Sun*. It is intended to provide help for teachers and their students. We hope it is viewed as a useful resource supportive of an informative, enjoyable, and enlightened teaching process. We hope that teachers enjoy using it as much as we enjoyed writing it.

## The Characters in the Play

[CCSS: RL.9-10.1, RL.9-10.3, RL.9-10.9, SL.9-10.1 | RL.11-12.1, RL.11-12.10, SL.11-12.1

The notes below will help you discuss the characters in *A Raisin in the Sun* with your class. There is a lot of information and there are several suggestions as to ways to get your students to understand the characters through discussions and exercises. Choose the timing and methods you feel are most appropriate for your own students.]

There are many ways to examine the characters in any play. For example, we could examine their language, think about the circumstances in which they live, see them reflected in the eyes of other characters, examine their behavior throughout the play, notice their growth as characters as the play progresses, and think about them as everyday people such as those we know in our real lives. Sometimes it even helps to think about the names that the playwright gave them. All of these pieces of evidence together give us a whole character.

In *A Raisin in the Sun* we could get to know characters by all of these means. Let's look, for instance, at a single character, Walter Lee Younger. Walter Lee's language skills mark him as a person who has not gained a great deal of education. Compared to his sister Beneatha's more cultivated speech, Walter's language lacks formal education and is marked by the dialect of a person without formal education. Hear him explaining to Ruth about how he and Willy and Bobo are going to purchase a liquor store:

Yeah. You see, this little liquor store we got in mind cost seventy-five thousand and we figured the initial investment on the place be 'bout thirty thousand, see. That be ten thousand each. 'Course there's a couple of hundred you got to pay so's you don't spend your life just waiting for them clowns to let your license get approved—

Walter Lee is a thirty-five-year-old Black man who has a wife and a young son. His family, including his mother and sister, live in a tiny apartment. Walter is humbled, perhaps humiliated, by the fact that his son sleeps on a day bed and that both his wife and his mother have had to work for other people in order for the family to survive. Walter himself works as a chauffeur for a white man and considers his job to be subservient: "Mama, that ain't no kind of job...that ain't nothing at all." So right from the earliest parts of the play, we know much about Walter and can begin to understand him as a character. In many ways, given his life situation, he is a sympathetic character.

However, we also see Walter as he is viewed by his own family. His wife is tired of listening to his complaints and wearily tells him again and again to leave her alone. She obviously has been listening to his complaining for a long time. Thus when he tells her that the husbands of "colored" women can't succeed because their women don't support them, she reminds him that "There **are** colored men who **do** things." Thus we add to our understanding of Walter Lee the fact that there is discord in his marriage and that, even when he is told that his wife is thinking of aborting their second child, he cannot seem to confront his life head on.

**Text between the previous page and this one has been omitted for the sample.**

For Walter Lee having money equals power, even in his own home. Notice the interaction between husband and wife when son Travis asks for fifty cents. Giving Travis a dollar re-assures Walter that he is the head of his family, that he is able to hand out money regardless of his wife's earlier decision not to. It pleases Walter that he can give Travis not only the original requested fifty cents but an additional fifty, and he makes the point clear to Ruth by flippantly telling Travis to "take a taxicab to school or something!" That he has to return to ask Ruth for money—ironically for carfare for himself—overshadows but doesn't negate the pleasure of having given Travis the money in the first place.

Think about how many people play lotteries today, how many of us would give almost anything we have to "strike it rich." Who among us hasn't thought at least a little bit about what we would do if we suddenly were rich? Who among us hasn't thought—however briefly—about what it would mean not to have to work for a living? How many of us tell ourselves that even if we won the lottery, we would still continue to work? And how many of us wonder if we are telling ourselves the truth?

Considering Walter Lee's dream will surely lead to good classroom discussion. Just go around the room and ask students what they would do with a million dollars. Everybody loves to play that game. Ask what having a lot of money would allow them to do or not do. Ask them what they think other groups of people would do if they suddenly came into a large amount of money.

Try to get students to think about how our aspirations in regard to money change with age. Urge them to think about how a little bit of money seemed like a lot when they were younger. It might be eye-opening for your students to have them discuss sudden wealth with their parents. Have them ask their parents what they would do if they had a million dollars. See if the parents' dreams are similar to or different from the dreams of their children. Have the students also ask some younger friends or siblings what they would do if they had a lot of money. The younger the children, probably the more materialistic the things they would do with the money. Use this discussion to refocus on generational issues in *A Raisin in the Sun*.

It might be useful to encourage students to examine their views of money as they relate to other classes of people and other races. Indeed, one way of getting into the discussions of the race-related issues that this play raises might be to ask students what other races might want if they had lots of money. Often many of us have preconceived notions about people of other races that are based on nothing more substantial than hearsay.

One point of discussion for the classroom is to talk with students about the stories we hear of people who die in seeming poverty only to have it revealed that they had hoarded millions of dollars. Ask what students think about saving up money during a lifetime just in order to have it. How much money can any one person use? How much money would it be good to have? You might get some articles on very rich people and how they spend their money. Students can probably tell stories they have heard about how some rich people live.

Another way to get discussion focussed on Walter Lee's dream is to encourage students to describe how he would probably spend a million dollars if he suddenly had it. Ask if Walter would spend the money differently at the end than at the beginning of the play. Introduce the

## Some Thematic Ideas for Discussion

CCSS: RL.9-10.1, RL.9-10.2, RL.9-10.3, RL.9-10.10, SL.9-10.1  
RL.11-12.1, RL.11-12.2, RL.11-12.5, RL.11-12.10, SL.11-12.1

### Dreams

Clearly, the first idea that needs to be discussed in *A Raisin in the Sun* is dreams. Dreams are, of course, an extension of a person. They are our aspirations, those things that we believe we want most in the world. Everyone likes to share their own dreams for the future. Have students share theirs with the whole class or in small groups. If you feel comfortable doing so, share some of your own dreams. You might spend some time distinguishing between dreams which we expect never to realize, so-called “pipe dreams,” versus real dreams which we have some expectation of being able to realize.

Perhaps one example of a pipe dream for the average person might be hitting it big in the music world and giving concerts all over the world. Perhaps a real dream might be establishing a local band and being able to play one’s music in local and regional establishments. That is not to say that pipe dreams are never accomplished but that it happens seldom.

But the wonderful thing about dreams is that sometimes the most unlikely ones come true—if we are willing to pursue them diligently and long enough. Someone who wants to become a great concert musician might very well do just that. Yet for someone else, even realizing the local musical dream might be difficult.

We urge you to give your students time to explore their own dreams and spend sufficient time talking about what happens in reality when dreams are deferred for too long, especially if those dreams should be realizable. What if society blocks our dreams for no good reason? What if our families fail to recognize the importance of our dreams and block them for their own reasons? If students become engaged in these issues, then they are much more likely to understand the play and to remember it.

Ask them what happens when a dream is deferred time after time? What is the result in terms of our self-esteem, our confidence, our faith in ourselves and others? There is so much that can be done regarding dreams in assignments and classroom discussions. Feel comfortable spending as much time as you need to discuss this important issue. It is, after all, at the heart of *A Raisin in the Sun*. If you have already talked at length about characters in the play, you will have spent a lot of time discussing their collective and individual dreams. Another way of looking at the dreams in *Raisin*, an obvious one, is to look at Langston Hughes’ poem as it reflects the events in the play.

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?

## Vocabulary Words from the Text Activity #2

### DIRECTIONS FOR STUDENTS

For this activity, you aren't being asked to figure out word meanings or look up words in a dictionary. All of the words are defined for you ahead of time. The purpose of the activity is to be sure that you understand all vocabulary words and that you have an additional opportunity to focus on small aspects of the play. Sometimes looking at smaller units of the play in isolation can make it easier for you to remember those parts.

This is likely to be an individual at-home activity. Using words 21-40 (from Act I), describe any one character in *A Raisin in the Sun*. Use as many of the 20 words as you possibly can without losing clear meaning.

Don't rush through the activity. Try instead to do something challenging with the words supplied to you. Don't worry, however, if your description of a character is somewhat contrived. It is difficult to use particular words just because they are assigned to you, but it also is challenging to attempt to apply words learned in one context to another situation.

Here's one example of how the activity might be done:

Because he's a little **neurotic** and almost **mad**, Walter Lee sometimes acts in a **furtive** manner and seems **shallow** although he really is a very **profound** and **inspirational** character. He needs to learn not to become **outraged** so easily so that he can become a **bastion** for his family. He approaches everything **self-righteously** and not at all **tentatively** so that other people become **indignant** toward him.

## **Sections of the Text for Close Examination**

### **Activity #1**

#### **DIRECTIONS FOR STUDENTS**

This section of the play will be used as part of your classroom discussion. It contains stage directions and comes at the beginning of the play before any character has spoken. If you read the section carefully, you will learn much about the play's setting, its characters, its themes, and the ways in which the play's author and directors have described things and people in order to make you able to see them more clearly. You don't have to size up the characters based only on speech, appearance, and movement. Here you have detailed stage directions that give you much more information about the characters.

Think how living in such an environment makes a person feel. Would the characters be different if they lived in a much larger place? Would they act differently if they owned their own property, even this tiny apartment? How do their surroundings affect what the characters think of themselves and what others think of them? Try to imagine the effect of environment on a person's life.

Pay attention to the words used in the description. Try to envision everything you are told about appearing up on a stage. Try to see Ruth enter the room and cross the stage. Think about what the author wanted you to see and to think. Come back to these descriptions from time to time during the reading of the play and think about each character in the family in relation to this early scene setting.

Your teacher will tell you how he or she wants to use this section of the text in classroom discussion. It is possible that you will be asked to write about this section during class time or at home. If so, consider the topic carefully and be sure to document your thoughts by giving specific examples from the text.

## **Writing from Personal Experience** (Directions and Topic Choices)

### **DIRECTIONS FOR STUDENTS**

To write from personal experience, you must respond to a question or a situation based on your own current knowledge, feelings, and beliefs. You should not have to do any real research for this but should need to give the topic a lot of thought and consideration. Your teacher may give you additional expectations for this assignment. But, at the very least, your writing should make a clear point, it should be well organized, and it should support its ideas with enough details to convince the reader that your point is valid. Below is a list of possible topics:

#### **Personal Experience Topic #1**

*A Raisin in the Sun* was written in the 1950's and reflects many issues of special interest to Black Americans at that time. Many of the issues are still very relevant today. One issue that was of particular interest both to Black and white Americans in that pre-civil rights era was the subject of Black families moving into what had previously been totally white communities. In many communities, when a single Black family would move in, there would be violence against the newcomers and often all of the white families who could afford to do would simply flee the neighborhood for another all-white community.

The question here is whether you believe that the Younger family should have made the move to Clybourne Park. Considering that their very lives will be in danger following their move, do you think that they should have moved or not?

Assume that you are friends with Travis Younger. He has asked for your advice about whether or not his family should move into Clybourne Park. Obviously, because he is a child, he will have to stay with his family no matter what they decide, but your job is to write a letter to Travis and explain to the best of your ability why you think the family's move is a good one or a bad one. You may assume that you and Travis are living in either the 1950's or in the current year.

#### **Personal Experience Topic #2**

Assume that Travis Younger has grown up and has become the mayor of a major American city. He is being interviewed by a reporter about his roots. What do you think Travis might tell the reporter about his days living in the apartment before the move to Clybourne Park? Write a script of questions that the reporter might ask and answers that Travis might give. Your script should include at least 10 significant questions and answers. It will probably be easiest for you to base your interview in the current year. It is up to you to decide how Travis will look back on his early life and how he will feel it has affected his recent success.

## Improvisation #3

### DIRECTIONS FOR STUDENTS

Like all improvisations, this is a scene of make-believe. But this scene will take a lot of thought on your part to try to put characters you have come to understand into a totally different environment with totally different problems. Just remember that no matter what their situation or problems, the characters will still have the same traits and the same motivations that they did in *A Raisin in the Sun*.

What we want for you to do first is to think through the interactions in the play between Walter Lee and Ruth. Remember how each manipulates the other to get what they feel they need or what they want. Think about the strengths and weaknesses of each character. Think about how each of the characters talked to Mama about the insurance money. Think about the way the two characters related to their son Travis.

Now think about the characters being the same as they were but not married to each other. Walter Lee is going to become Joe. Ruth will be Betty.

Joe and Betty work together in an office setting. Joe is Betty's supervisor, but Betty has been with the company several years longer than Joe has. Both are in sales. An important customer is due to visit the office at any time. Although the customer is Joe's client, he wants Betty to help him with the sale because he knows that Betty is very good at selling.

Joe has dropped by Betty's office in order to convince her to help him.

## More and More Activities

What follows is basically a resource list of activities for you, the teacher. Some of them are simple, and some are very difficult. Some require no special skills, but some require especially talented and dedicated students. How you wish to use them is absolutely up to you. They are presented in the sincere hope that somewhere in this grab bag of activities there is a project that appeals to every student and every teacher.

Although there are only 50 numbered activities, many of them actually are multiple assignments. There are eleven major characters in *A Raisin in the Sun*. When an activity calls for choosing a character on which to base an assignment, the students actually have eleven different choices. And in the case of some other assignments, there are even more possible combinations.

The suggested activities are presented in no special order and are attached to only the barest of suggestions for their use. They are what they are—more and more activities.

1. Ask students to consider starting a new company. They must hire all staff from the cast of characters in *A Raisin in the Sun*. They could present their decisions to the whole class. Remind them that they should tell what kind of company they have created, the positions they have filled, who they have filled them with, and why.
2. Students could think about what kind of plays Lorraine Hansberry would be writing today. They could create a play that they think Hansberry would be writing, name it, make up a list of characters, and present a synopsis of their play.
3. Ask students to pretend that someone from outer space has been deposited into the middle of the Youngers' apartment on a weekday morning. The alien would decide that everyone on this planet lives, behaves, and thinks as the Younger family members do. The students could pretend to be the alien and write a letter back to their planet describing the new world they are observing. These letters could just be turned in to you or could be read for the whole class' enjoyment. Or you could have them handed in and then choose the best three or four for reading aloud in class.
4. Students—singly or in a group—could set one or more of the scenes of *A Raisin in the Sun* to music. The music could be recorded and performed solely for the teacher or presented to the whole class. If you choose this activity, you might have the music playing when students enter the classroom each day and play a little bit more each day to set the scene for studying *A Raisin in the Sun*.
5. Students could research the popularity and appeal of Afro haircuts for African Americans that began during the 1960's. It might be useful to accompany the paper with some pictures of well-known people sporting Afros.