

Reflections:

A Student Response Journal for...

A Raisin in the Sun

by Lorraine Hansberry

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ACT I, SCENE 1

1. Considering the situation of each character that has been introduced, with which one do you sympathize the most? Write what you imagine a day in this person's life would be like. If you can, include aspects of this person's situation that aroused your sympathy.
2. Write a letter to a friend and describe the apartment and apartment house that this family lives in.
3. Ruth and Travis have an argument about leaving for school properly dressed and neat. Travis is very upset, but his mother straightens out the situation through humor. How would you have dealt with your son if he had a similar attitude? Do you think strictness or laughter is the best way to control a family?
4. Walter says to Ruth, "A man needs for a woman to back him up..." How do you feel about that? Can you describe an incident in which you saw a woman support a man or fail to support the man she was with?

Response Journal

5. Sometimes conflict, if handled constructively, can lead to understanding between people. Can you think of anything to say to Ruth that might help her understand Walter's needs? Write about an argument that you had in the past and describe a way that you could have handled it better.

6. Why do you suppose that Walter gave Travis money for lunch, and even some extra money, when the father did not even have enough for the day and had to embarrass himself by saying to Ruth, "I need some money for carfare"? Would you give your child your last bit of money under similar circumstances?

7. Walter accuses his wife of not building him up, of not making him feel like he's someone important. Do you think she should be doing this or not? Describe an incident in real life or fiction when you saw this type of situation occur.

8. Beneatha and Ruth both state that the insurance check is "Mama's money." They believe that whatever Mama wants to do with the money is fine. If you were Mama's friend, what would you suggest that she do with the check?

A Raisin in the Sun

9. Imagine that your mother wrote you a letter about what kind of wife you should be or what kind you should marry. Write a letter back to her explaining your thoughts.

10. Write down the conversation that might take place if your family won a large sum of money.

11. Beneatha says to Walter, “You know, biology is the greatest. I dissected something that looked just like you yesterday.” Relate a few of your favorite “put downs.”

12. Walter says to his sister, “Who the hell told you you had to be a doctor? If you so crazy ‘bout messing ‘round with sick people—then go be a nurse like other women—or just get married and be quiet...” What you would say to Walter in response?

13. Mama says, “There are some ideas we ain’t going to have in this house. Not as long as I am at the head of this family.” She is speaking about Bennie’s negative comments about God. Make a list of subjects that you would not allow to be discussed if you were the head of a family. Across from each idea, explain why that particular subject would be forbidden.

Response Journal

14. Beneatha says to her mother, "There simply is no blasted God - there is only man and it is he who makes miracles!" Write a letter to Beneatha responding to her comment.

ACT I, SCENE 2

15. What do you find comical in this scene?
16. In an argument about the future, Walter comments that money is life. To what extent do you agree with Walter that life really is all about money?
17. Consider the Saturday morning activities of the Younger household. In what ways are Saturday mornings in your home similar or quite different?
18. Walter is frustrated by his life, family, social position, and future. Write out the conversation that might take place if Walter went to a counselor. Walter says, "My family is driving me crazy!" Finish the dialogue.

A Raisin in the Sun

19. Bennie states that she is searching for her “identity.” A person’s identity is his or her set of character traits. What do you know about your identity? Specifically, what are your personal characteristics? How did you discover some of them?

20. Walter says bitterly to Mama, “So that’s the peace and comfort you went out and bought us today?” He is referring to her decision to use the money for a house. Why should an actor playing Walter say the words “peace and comfort” with nastiness in his voice? What do you think Walter really wants to say?

21. Asagai gives Beneatha an African name meaning “One for Whom Bread—Food—Is Not Enough.” Describe a person you know who could be given this name.

22. In this scene, the reader discovers that Ruth is considering having an abortion. Imagine that you are Ruth; write about your plans, feelings, and situation. What do you feel Ruth should say to Walter?

23. How do you suppose Walter felt when Mama says to him, “You are a disgrace to your father’s memory”? Can you remember ever feeling like Walter felt?