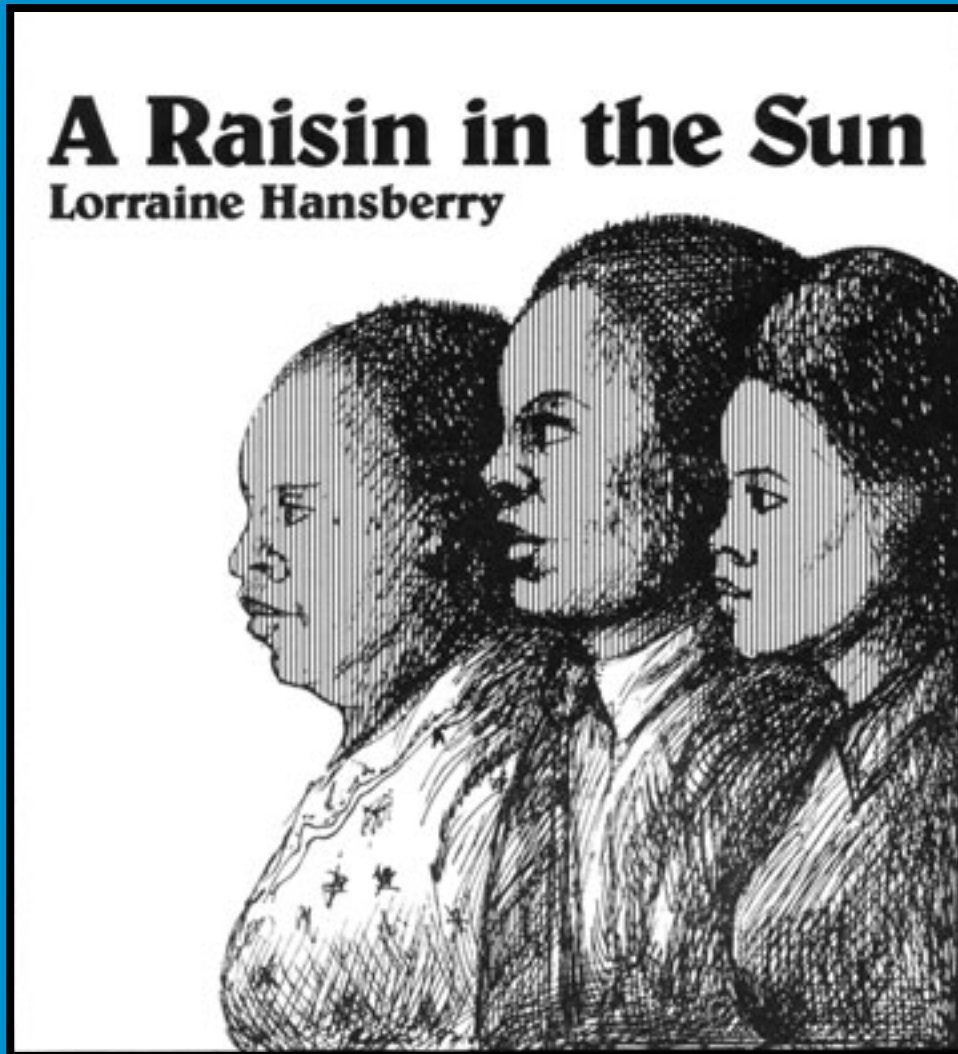


Novel·Ties



A Study Guide

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LEARNING LINKS

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For the Teacher

This reproducible study guide to use in conjunction with the play *A Raisin in the Sun* consists of lessons for guided reading. Written in act-by-act format, the guide contains a synopsis, pre-reading activities, vocabulary and comprehension exercises, as well as extension activities to be used as follow-up to the play.

In a homogeneous classroom, whole class instruction with one title is appropriate. In a heterogeneous classroom, reading groups should be formed: each group works on a different novel at its own reading level. Depending upon the length of time devoted to reading in the classroom, this play, with its guide and accompanying lessons, may be completed in three to six weeks.

Begin using NOVEL-TIES for reading development by distributing the play and a folder to each student. Distribute duplicated pages of the study guide for students to place in their folders. After examining the cover and glancing through the book, students can participate in several pre-reading activities. Vocabulary questions should be considered prior to reading an act; all other work should be done after the act has been read. Comprehension questions can be answered orally or in writing. The classroom teacher should determine the amount of work to be assigned, always keeping in mind that readers must be nurtured and that the ultimate goal is encouraging students' love of reading.

The benefits of using NOVEL-TIES are numerous. Students read good literature in the original, rather than in abridged or edited form. The good reading habits, formed by practice in focusing on interpretive comprehension and literary techniques, will be transferred to the books students read independently. Passive readers become active, avid readers.

PRE-READING ACTIVITIES AND DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. The title of this play is taken from a line in Langston Hughes' poem "What Happens to a Dream Deferred?" which is printed at the beginning of the play. Read the poem to yourself and consider its meaning. What does the poet believe happens to frustrated dreams? Do you agree? What do you think this play will be about?
2. What are your criteria for personal success? Are they wealth, power, fame, contentment, or any other criteria? As you read the play, compare your criteria with the characters' ideas of success.
3. Which racial, ethnic, and religious groups in the United States have been the object of prejudice? Of all these groups, why has it been particularly difficult for African Americans to overcome prejudice?
4. *A Raisin in the Sun* was first performed on stage in 1959, at the beginning of the national civil rights movement. Research the social and political position of African Americans in the United States at that time. Which conditions have improved since 1959 and which have remained the same? Which conditions have deteriorated?
5. Authors and playwrights sometimes use dialect to make their characters more realistic and to locate them in a particular place and time. Look at the use of dialect in novels such as *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*, *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, or *Maniac Magee*, and discuss why the authors chose to use dialect instead of standard English speech. As you read *Raisin in the Sun*, determine how dialect adds to the authenticity of the play.
6. During the course of the play, several references are made to people, cultures, and events outside the play. Do some research on the following so that you will understand the reference to each in the play:
 - Ashanti
 - Bantu
 - Benin
 - Chaka
 - Greta Garbo
 - Jomo Kenyatta
 - Middle Passage
 - Mrs. Miniver
 - Prometheus
 - Songhay
 - Uncle Tom
 - Booker T. Washington
7. Look at the Glossary of Terms for a Play on page three of this study guide. An understanding of these terms will provide you with a deeper appreciation of the play.

Act I, Scene One (cont.)

Questions:

1. Judging by the dialogue between Ruth and Walter, how would you characterize their relationship? Use specific examples of dialogue to substantiate your opinion.
2. What is unrealistic about Walter's attitude toward life?
3. How would you characterize Travis's relationship with his parents and his grandmother?
4. Based on the action and dialogue in the first scene, what is the central conflict in this play?
5. How do Mama and Walter each want to spend the insurance money? What does this reveal about each of their personalities?
6. How does Mama display her inner strength?

Questions for Discussion:

1. Why do you think the playwright provides a carefully detailed description of the Younger apartment?
2. Given what you know about Walter and Ruth at this point in the play, who do you think is right about Willy Harris? Is Willy a good businessman or a "good-for-nothing loudmouth"?

Literary Devices:

- I. *Foreshadowing*—Foreshadowing is a literary device in which statements or events give clues in advance of an important event. What might the following foreshadow?

WALTER: Something the matter with you this morning?

MAMA: . . . What's the matter with you this morning, Ruth? You looks right peaked . . .

RUTH: Ain't nothin' can tear at you like losin' your baby.

- II. *Symbolism*—In literature, a symbol is an object that represents an idea or a set of ideas. What do you think Mama's plant symbolizes?