STUDENT RESOURCES IN CONTEXT & GOOGLE DRIVE

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Plot Summary: A Raisin in the Sun

Introduction

A Raisin in the Sun was first produced in 1959 and anticipated unprecedented success when her play became a Broadway success. Lorraine Hansberry, the first African American woman playwright to achieve this success, was a remarkable artist who achieved unprecedented success when her play became a Broadway success. In contrast, the success of A Raisin in the Sun is particularly stunning.

In part because there were few black playwrights—as well as few black men and women who could attend Broadway productions—the play was hindered by a lack of financial support during its initial production. Producers were reluctant to risk financial involvement in such an unprecedented event, for had the play been less well-written or well-acted, it could have suffered an incredible failure. Eventually, however, the play did find financial backing, and after staging initial performances in New Haven, Connecticut, it reached Broadway.
Plot Summary: A Raisin in the Sun
Explaination of: "A Raisin in the Sun" by Lorraine Hansberry

*A Raisin in the Sun* (1959), the first and best-known play of African American dramatist Lorraine Hansberry (1930-1965), tells the story of the Youngers, a black working-class family that has decided to move into a white neighborhood. The play pioneered the acceptance of African American drama by Broadway producers and audiences, who instantly responded to its universal theme of the search for freedom and a better life.

The struggle for progress is a predominant theme in the play, which centers on the Youngers, who work toward a better life after the death of Big Walter, the patriarch of the family. Set in a run-down apartment on the Southside of Chicago after World War II, the play opens with the family contemplating what to do with the ten thousand dollars of insurance money awarded after Big Walter’s death. Family matriarch Lena and her children, Walter and Beneatha, regard the money as the key to the realization of their dreams — of escaping their ghetto surroundings into middle-class respectability — but they all envision different paths to this goal. Walter wants to invest in a liquor store, while his sister, Beneatha, hopes that the money will allow her to attend medical school. Lena, who is an authoritative yet loving mother, decides to put the money toward a down payment on a house in an exclusively white neighborhood.

Devastated by Lena’s decision, Walter wanders aimlessly through the city, seemingly stuck in the stagnant, predominantly black environment. After his mother gives him part of the insurance money for his investment, he is filled with the sense that he now has the power to transform their lives. Meanwhile, the family is approached by Karl Lindner, a representative of their new neighborhood, who urges them implicitly to abandon their moving plans by offering to buy their new home at a profit. The Youngers dismiss him angrily from the apartment. Walter’s sense of
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Overview - A Raisin in the Sun

Plot Summary: A Raisin in the Sun

DISCovering Authors, 2003

Introduction

A Raisin in the Sun was first produced in 1959 and anticipates many of the issues which were to divide American culture during the decade of the 1960s. Lorraine Hansberry, the playwright, was an unknown dramatist who achieved unprecedented success when her play became a Broadway sensation. Not only were successful women playwrights rare at the time, but successful young black women playwrights were virtually unheard of. Within its context, the success of A Raisin in the Sun is particularly stunning.

In part because there were few black playwrights—as well as few black men and women who could attend Broadway productions—the play was hindered by a lack of financial support during its initial production. Producers hesitated to risk financial involvement in such an unprecedented event, for had the play been less well-written or well-acted, it could have suffered an incredible failure. Eventually, however, the play did find financial backing, and after staging initial performances in New Haven, Connecticut, it reached Broadway.

Compounding the racial challenges the play posed was its length of nearly three hours as it was originally written. Because audiences are not accustomed to plays of such length, especially by a newcomer, a couple of significant scenes were cut from the original production. (These scenes are sometimes included in later renditions.) These scenes include Walter’s bedtime conversation with Travis and the family’s interaction with Mrs. Johnson. In addition, the scene in which Beneatha appears with a “natural” haircut was eliminated in the original version primarily because Diana Sands, the actress, was not attractive enough with this haircut to reinforce the point of the scene. This scene would become more crucial as cultural ideas shifted.

Plot

Act I, Scene One

The opening scene of A Raisin in the Sun occurs on a Friday morning when the members of the Younger family are preparing to go to school or work. During this scene, as in the opening scene of most plays, several key pieces of information are revealed. The family’s inadequate living situation is conveyed through the fact that they share a bathroom with other tenants in their apartment house, and through the fact that Travis must sleep on the sofa in the living room. As...
Scene from *A Raisin in the Sun*.

*Gale Student Resources in Context*, 2010

Scene from *A Raisin in the Sun*. 1961 film version of *Raisin In The Sun* starring Ruby Dee and Sidney Poitier. © Columbia/The Kobal Collection/The Picture Desk, Inc. This image may be used for personal, non-commercial purposes only. **Full Text:** COPYRIGHT 2015 Gale, Cengage Learning.

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FOURSCORE and seven years ago our fathers brought forth on this continent a new nation, conceived in liberty, and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal. Now we are engaged in a great civil war, testing whether that nation, or any nation so conceived and so dedicated, can long endure. We are met on a great battlefield of that war. We have come to dedicate a portion of that field as a final resting-place for those who here gave their lives that the nation might live. It is altogether fitting and proper that we should do this. But, in a larger sense, we cannot dedicate—we cannot consecrate—we cannot hallow—this ground. The brave men, living and dead, who struggled here have consecrated it, far above our poor power to add or detract. The world will little note, nor long remember, what we say here, but it can never forget what they did here. It is for us the living, rather, to be dedicated here to the unfinished work which they who fought here have thus far so nobly advanced. It is rather for us to be here dedicated to the great task remaining before us—that from these honored dead we take increased devotion to that cause for which they gave the last full measure of devotion—that we here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain—that this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom and that government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth.
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Gettysburg Address

The Civil War, 1999

About this Document

Gettysburg Address, by Abraham Lincoln, 1863

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Notes: Lincoln Bio: http://school.cs5.proxy.4you.org/levels/high/article/100057
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