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**IDX G9 ENGLISH H STUDY GUIDE ISSUE 6**

**By TaeYun Kang**

Raisin in the Sun

Author: Lorraine Hansberry

Setting: South Side of Chicago, late 1940s – early 1950s

Origin of title: *Harlem* by Langston Hughes

“What happens to a dream deferred? Does it dry up like a raisin in the sun?”

Simple Summary:

This play is about the Younger family, an African American family living in a small apartment. They receive a $10,000 life insurance check after Big Walter’s death. Each family member has different dreams for how to use the money:

Lena Younger (Mama) – wants to buy a house for the family

Walter Lee Younger – wants to invest in a liquor store for financial support

Beneatha Younger (Bennie) – wants to use it for her Medical school tuition

Ruth Younger – supports Mama but worries about the family’s future

Travis Younger – just exists with his dream of being a bus driver

Characters:

* Mama: Walter’s mother
  + The matriarch
  + Religious
  + Stubborn
  + Caring
* Walter: Ruth’s husband
  + Wanna-be patriarch
  + Ambitious
  + Selfish/ rude
* Bennie: Walter’s sister
  + Intelligent
  + Independent
  + Ambitious to find “who she is”
* Ruth: Ruth
  + Exhausted
  + Pregnant (thinking about abortion)
  + Wishes for a stable life
* Travis: Walter’s son
  + Young
  + Just young
* Asagai: Bennie’s friend
  + Intelligent
  + Encourages Bennie to accept African culture
* George: Bennie’s boyfriend
  + Rich
  + Rude
  + Money > anything

Symbols:

* Mama’s plant
* Insurance Check
* Travis

Themes:

* American Dream
* Racial Discrimination
* Family
* Identity
* Gender Roles

PEEL/essay prompts

* How does Hansberry present the theme of the American Dream in *A Raisin in the Sun*?
* How does racial discrimination impact the Younger family’s aspirations?
* How does Bennie challenge traditional gender and cultural expectations?
* **How does Hansberry explore the theme of masculinity and Walter’s role as a provider in the family?**
* **Compare and contrast the male characters in the play—Walter, George, and Asagai. What do they represent?**
* Analyze the significance of setting in the play. How does the cramped apartment reflect the family’s struggles?