A Raisin in the Sun

INTRODUCTION

BRIEF BIOGRAPHY OF LORRAINE HANSBERRY

Hansberry was raised in an African-American middle-class family with activist foundations. The granddaughter of a slave and the niece of a prominent African-American professor, Hansberry grew up with a keen awareness of African-American history and the ongoing struggle for civil rights. In 1938 Hansberry's family moved to an all-white neighborhood in Chicago and suffered violent attacks from neighbors, who had signed a restrictive covenant to exclude black families from the community. Hansberry's family fought the covenant all the way to the Supreme Court, which ruled in favor of the Hansberrys in 1940. Hansberry attended the University of Wisconsin for several years before dropping out and moving to New York in 1950 to pursue writing and social activism. Hansberry's best-known work, *A Raisin in the Sun*, premiered in 1959, making her the first African-American female playwright to have a play produced on Broadway. Hansberry died of pancreatic cancer at 34, in 1965.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

In the 1920s and 30s the discriminatory "Jim Crow" laws in the South prompted many African Americans to relocate to Northern cities, a movement called the Great Migration. Nonetheless, while the North did not have laws demanding policies of segregation be followed, discrimination persisted also in the North, leading to segregated housing, education, and employment. In 1949 the United States Congress passed the National Housing Act to address substandard housing and to provide adequate and more integrated housing options for minorities. In 1954 the Supreme Court ruled in *Brown v. Board of Education* that school segregation was unconstitutional.

RELATED LITERARY WORKS

Richard Wright's novel *Native Son* (1940) describes the life of Bigger Thomas, a poor African-American man who lives in Chicago's South Side in the 1930s. Wright's autobiography *Black Boy* (1945) discusses the author's experience of racial discrimination and poverty in twentieth-century Chicago. James Baldwin's *Notes of a Native Son* (1955) and Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man* (1952) explore urban African-American life, the question of assimilation, and the realities of Northern racism.

KEY FACTS

- **Full Title:** *A Raisin in the Sun*
- **When Written:** 1950s
- **Where Written:** New York City
- **When Published:** The play premiered on Broadway on March 11, 1959. Random House published the play in 1959.
- **Literary Period:** Social Realism
- **Genre:** Dramatic stage play
- **Setting:** Chicago's South Side, sometime between 1945 and 1959
- **Climax:** Walter Lee loses the family's insurance payment in an investment scheme.
- **Antagonist:** Karl Lindner and the Clybourne Park Improvement Association; racial prejudice and economic hardship

EXTRA CREDIT

A Raisin in the Spotlight *A Raisin in the Sun* inspired several adaptations, including a Tony Award-winning musical. Partly written by the Lorraine Hansberry's ex-husband Robert Nemiroff, after her death, *Raisin* added song and dance to the Youngers' story, winning the 1973 Tony Award for Best Musical. More loosely based on the original story, the play *Clybourne Park* tells the story of the white family that sells its house to the Youngers. With its first act set in 1959 and its second act set in 2009, *Clybourne Park* tracks the development of the neighborhood and its residents over fifty years.

Mother to Son Hansberry originally titled the play, *The Crystal Stair*, a name that, like *A Raisin in the Sun*, comes from a Langston Hughes poem. The poem, called "Mother to Son," speaks to the hardships that many African-American families have faced: "Well, son, I'll tell you: / Life for me ain't been no crystal stair / . . . But all the time / I'se been a-climbin' on."

PLOT SUMMARY

A Raisin in the Sun examines the effects of racial prejudice on the fulfillment of an African-American family's dreams. The play centers on the Youngers, a working-class family that lives in Chicago's South Side during the mid-twentieth century. Shortly before the play begins, the head of the Younger family, Big Walter, dies, leaving the family to inherit a $10,000 life insurance payment. The family eagerly awaits the arrival of the insurance check, which has the potential to make the family's long deferred dreams into reality. However, the members of the Younger family have conflicting ideas—conflicting dreams—regarding the best use for the money, which causes tension.

At the beginning of the play Mama, Big Walter's widow, expresses uncertainty regarding the best use for the money. Mama tells her daughter-in-law, Ruth, that she and her late husband shared the dream of owning a house, but that poverty and racism prevented them from fulfilling this dream during Big Walter's lifetime. Mama's daughter, Beneatha, aspires to attend medical school and become a doctor, a considerable challenge for an African-American woman at that time. Beneatha's older brother, Walter Lee, belittles his sister's dream, instead suggesting that she simply get married. Walter wants to use the insurance payment as an investment in a liquor store, an idea that Mama and his wife Ruth both dislike. Ruth, worried about her troubled marriage and the family's cramped living situation, shares Mama's hope for a house, although she is willing to support her husband's dream because, as she tells Mama, "He needs this chance." Walter finds his job as a white man's chauffeur demeaning and he sees the liquor store investment as the only path towards a better future.

On the same day that the check arrives, Ruth finds out that she is pregnant, which makes her question whether the family can afford to raise another child. Knowing that Ruth is considering an abortion, Mama begs Walter to convince his wife to keep the baby. Walter is unable to say anything and leaves the apartment. As Mama watches her family "falling apart," she makes the decision to place a down payment on a home in the white neighborhood of Clybourne Park, hoping that her choice to "do something bigger" will bring the family together.

Mama's decision to purchase a house only sends Walter deeper into despair as he sees the opportunity to fulfill his dream disappear. On the other hand, the new house fills Ruth with joy and hope for her family, helping her to imagine the possibility of a happy future for her unborn child. Several weeks later, Walter continues to grow more despondent and skips work three days in a row. As Mama realizes that "I been doing to you what the rest of the world been doing to you," she decides to transfer control of the household and the rest of the insurance money to Walter, asking only that he set aside a portion for Beneatha's schooling. Mama's decision reinvigorates Walter.

A week later, the family is happily preparing for its move when Karl Lindner arrives and tells them of Clybourne Park's offer to buy their new home as a way to dissuade the family from moving to the neighborhood. The family confidently refuses the offer. Moments later, Walter's friend Bobo enters and tells Walter that Willy Harris has disappeared with the liquor store investment. Without heeding Mama's advice, Walter had invested the entirety of the insurance money in the liquor store, and the loss leaves the family on the brink of financial ruin.

An hour later, the Nigerian student Joseph Asagai visits Beneatha and finds her distraught over the lost money. Asagai asks Beneatha to marry him and "come home" to Africa with him, a sudden proposal that Beneatha says she will need to consider. Soon after, Walter informs the family that he will accept Lindner's offer, which greatly disappoints them. However, as Walter and his son, Travis, face Lindner, Walter reclaims his dignity and refuses Lindner's offer. Excited but well aware of the dangers that await them, the Youngers leave their apartment and head to their new home.

CHARACTERS

MAJOR CHARACTERS

Lena Younger (Mama) – The matriarch of the Younger family, Lena, commonly referred to as "Mama," is Walter Lee and Beneatha's mother and Travis' grandmother. Lena is a "full-bodied and strong" woman in her early sixties with a subtle air of "grace and beauty." Lena possesses the "noble bearing" of a woman of "Southwest Africa," although her speech "is as careless as her carriage is precise." Mama takes great pride in her family and works as a domestic maid to help support them. A devout Christian, Lena is a woman of traditional values who dreams of buying a house for her family.

Walter Lee Younger – Mama's oldest child and Beneatha's brother. Walter is married to Ruth and is Travis' father. Walter is a "lean, intense young man" in his mid-thirties and "nervous movements and erratic speech habits" characterize his behavior. Walter hopes to use the insurance money as an investment in a liquor store, which would fulfill his dream of becoming a business owner who can support his family. Walter finds his dead-end job as a chauffeur to be emasculating. Walter struggles to define his position within the family and Mama's eventual decision to make him head of the household refortifies his personal identity.

Beneatha Younger – Nicknamed "Bennie," Beneatha is Mama's daughter and Walter Lee's younger sister. A twenty-year-old college student with dreams of becoming a doctor, Beneatha is "as slim and intense as her brother," with an "intellectual face." Beneatha holds modern views on gender and shows great interest in her African heritage. The most educated member of the Younger family, Beneatha is not afraid to butt heads with Mama, Walter, and others when it comes to her opinions on religion, feminism, and racial assimilation. She dreams of becoming a doctor, and believes that she should have the right to express herself, a concept foreign to the other women in the play. Beneatha's way of speaking is different from the rest of her family's speech, characterized by her education and a Midwestern rather than a Southern accent.

Ruth Younger – Walter Lee's wife and Travis' mother. About thirty years old, Ruth was once "exceptionally" pretty, although an air of "disappointment has already begun to hang in her face." Her demeanor indicates that life has delivered "little that she expected," and, as Walter says, she is "tired" of living in their cramped apartment. Like Mama, Ruth works as a domestic

maid and also does much of the cooking and cleaning in the Youngers' home. Deeply dedicated to her family, Ruth tries to repair her failing marriage with Walter and worries about Travis' childhood in the South Side ghetto. Aware of the emotional strains and economic demands on the family, Ruth contemplates having an abortion when it becomes clear that she has become unexpectedly pregnant during the play, although she decides against it. Ruth shares Mama's dream of purchasing a home for the family.

Travis Younger – The son of Walter Lee and Ruth, Travis is the youngest member of the family. A "sturdy, handsome" boy of about ten years old, Travis sleeps on a make-down bed in the Youngers' living room. Travis is a good-natured and persistent young boy who, for the most part, obeys his parents and grandmother. Travis is excited by the prospect of moving into the Youngers' new house.

Joseph Asagai – A Nigerian man studying in Chicago, Joseph Asagai is a student who Beneatha met on her college campus. Asagai is a "rather dramatic-looking" young man who takes great pride in his African heritage and dreams of Nigerian independence from colonial rule. Asagai is thoughtful and well-spoken and he fosters Beneatha's interest in her African roots. At the play's end, Asagai asks Beneatha to marry him and "come home" to Africa.

George Murchison – A wealthy young man who dates Beneatha. Raised in a well-to-do black family, George is somewhat shallow and conceited, taking great pride in his family's social status and his ability to make highbrow cultural references. In addition to his wealth George is good-looking, and the Youngers approve of his relationship with Beneatha, although her interest in him is never strong and fades during the course of the play. Unlike Asagai, George does not pride himself on his African heritage and he isn't interested in Beneatha's intellect.

Karl Lindner – The only white character to appear onstage during the play, Karl Lindner is a representative of the Clybourne Park Improvement Association, which seeks to dissuade the Youngers from moving to its all-white neighborhood. Lindner is a "quiet-looking middle-aged" man who, when describing Clybourne Park's offer to the Youngers, insists in vain, "that race prejudice simply doesn't enter into it."

Mrs. Johnson – The Youngers' meddling neighbor in their apartment in Chicago's South Side. A "rather squeaky wide-eyed lady of no particular age," Mrs. Johnson is a noisy neighbor who takes a voyeuristic interest in the Youngers' decision to move to all-white Clybourne Park – a decision that she takes to be practically suicidal.

Walter Younger (Big Walter) – Lena Younger's recently deceased husband and the father of Walter Lee and Beneatha. Big Walter's death provides the family with an insurance payment of $10,000, part of which serves as the down payment on the Youngers' new home. Although he was "hard-headed, mean, [and] kind of wild with women," Big Walter "sure loved his children" and practically "kill[ed] himself" working to provide for his family. Big Walter shared his wife's dream of buying a house.

Willy Harris – Never appearing onstage, Willy Harris is Walter Lee's supposed friend and business partner. Willy Harris swindles Walter Lee and Bobo out of their investments in the liquor store, disappearing with the money and leaving Walter in a state of despair and financial ruin. From the start, Ruth dislikes and distrusts Harris, calling him a "good-for-nothing loudmouth."

MINOR CHARACTERS

Bobo – A friend of Walter Lee who, like Walter, also falls prey to Willy Harris' liquor store investment scheme. A "very slight little man," the bumbling and "pitiful" Bobo is the one who tells Walter and Ruth that Willy Harris has conned them out of their investments.

Mr. and Mrs. Arnold – The wealthy white couple that employs Walter Lee as a chauffeur. Mr. and Mrs. Arnold never appear onstage.

Moving Men – Two hired men who appear onstage in the play's final moments to help the Youngers move their belongings to Clybourne Park.

THEMES

In LitCharts literature guides, each theme gets its own color-coded icon. These icons make it easy to track where the themes occur most prominently throughout the work. If you don't have a color printer, you can still use the icons to track themes in black and white.

DREAMS

Dreams possess great importance in *A Raisin in the Sun*, with the play's name coming from a 1951 Langston Hughes poem titled *Montage of a Dream Deferred*. In the poem, part of which serves as the play's epigraph (a quotation at the beginning of a book that elaborates on its major themes) the poet asks, "What happens to a dream deferred?" pondering whether it shrivels up "like a raisin in the sun" or explodes. Hughes' open question forms the basis of Hansberry's work, with the intertwined and conflicting ambitions of the Youngers driving the play's plot. Each character clings to distinct dreams, which have long been deferred due to socioeconomic limitations placed on the family by racism. The persistence of these dreams lends the play a pervasive sense of hope, despite the conclusion's

foreshadowing of coming struggles for the family in Clybourne Park.

Mama and her late husband Big Walter's dream of owning a home forms the crux of the play. Clinging to a dream deferred for nearly 35 years, Mama recalls Big Walter's statement that it seems "like God didn't see fit to give the black man nothing but dreams," linking the postponement of her dream to racial inequality. Ironically, it is Big Walter's death, with its resulting $10,000 insurance payment, that makes the realization of Mama's dream possible by the end of the play. Like Mama, Ruth clings to the dream of a home, which generates conflict with her husband, Walter Lee, who dreams of becoming a self-sufficient business owner. Similarly, Walter's dream of owning a liquor store (one of the few business ventures open to an African-American man in mid-century Chicago) stands in stark contrast to his sister Beneatha's dream of becoming a doctor. However, by the play's end Walter's lost investment places both his and Beneatha's dreams in jeopardy, casting a shadow over the play's semi-hopeful conclusion, which centers on Mama's actualized dream. With the insurance money gone, Walter's and Beneatha's dreams for the future appear in danger of further postponement, recalling broader struggles with social forces beyond the characters' control.

DIGNITY AND PRIDE

A central virtue in the Younger household, dignity exerts a unifying force throughout the play. Mama expresses pride in her family's background and tries to instill in her children a sense of respect for their ancestors, who were Southern slaves and sharecroppers. Although some characters, such as Mrs. Johnson, criticize the family as "one proud-acting bunch of colored folks," the family holds fast to its ancestral dignity, an inheritance it considers to be greater than gold. At the play's climax, the Youngers' sense of pride gives them the strength to reject Karl Lindner's dehumanizing offer to buy back their new home because, as Mama says, "Ain't nobody in my family never let nobody pay 'em no money that was a way of telling us we wasn't fit to walk the earth." Despite the family's dire financial situation following Walter Lee's misguided investment, the Youngers resolutely refuse to forfeit their dignity in pursuit of economic gain.

Walter's loss and eventual recovery of his pride constitute a major plotline of the play. His personal crisis of pride, brought on by his inability to support his family in his dead-end job as a chauffeur, culminates with his decision regarding Karl Lindner's offer to purchase the Youngers' new house. Upon first meeting Lindner, Walter, Ruth, and Beneatha resoundingly reject his offer, demonstrating their collective familial pride. However, after squandering the family's insurance payment, Walter decides to accept Lindner's offer, showing his horrified family how he will act out the stereotype of a groveling black man while signing the contract with Lindner. It is only after Mama insists that Travis witness his father's demeaning transaction with Lindner that Walter rediscovers his self-worth while standing behind "the sixth generation [of] our family in this country." In a quietly triumphant moment, Walter reclaims his personal pride, asserts his family's historical right to be treated fairly in their country, and refortifies his family's dignity.

RACE, DISCRIMINATION, AND ASSIMILATION

In 1959 much of the United States, including Chicago, remained *de facto* segregated, meaning that racial segregation persisted in education, employment, and housing even though the Supreme Court had overturned segregation that was established by law as unconstitutional. Set in *de facto* segregated Chicago, Hansberry's play draws on stories from the author's own life, such as her family's experience with housing discrimination in 1930s Chicago. After moving to a house in an all-white neighborhood, Hansberry's family endured legal battles and physical threats not unlike the "bombs" that Walter, Ruth, and Mrs. Johnson reference in the play. Despite the suggestion by Karl Lindner that "race prejudice simply doesn't enter into" Clybourne Park's offer to buy back the Youngers' home, he hints at the very real dangers that accompany the family's decision to relocate to a white neighborhood.

Certain characters in the play, such as George Murchison, address persistent racial discrimination by directing their efforts toward assimilation, whereby one integrates into the mainstream of society. Beneatha, declaring that she "hate[s] assimilationist Negroes," condemns George as "ashamed of his heritage" when he initially scoffs at her close-cut, "natural" hair. George retorts that the "heritage" in which Beneatha takes such pride is "nothing but a bunch of raggedy-assed spirituals and some grass huts!" With this argument, Hansberry gives voice to the varied opinions of African-American thinkers, such as Booker T. Washington (who argued in favor of gradual assimilation of African Americans) and Marcus Garvey (who championed pride in African heritage and called for African Americans to return to Africa).

In the same vein as Garvey, Hansberry explores the idea of Africa as a home for African Americans, a view most clearly articulated by Joseph Asagai, a Nigerian student. Following the loss of Walter's investment Asagai suggests that a disheartened Beneatha "come home with me . . . to Africa." Asagai's suggestion that Beneatha move to Nigeria with him to explore her African roots reflected the surge in African studies that gained momentum in the late 1950s. While Beneatha shows genuine interest in her African heritage, she does not answer Asagai's proposal within the context of the play, hinting that she may not go so far as to think of Africa as her "home."

GENDER AND FEMINISM

A Raisin in the Sun anticipates the massive changes in gender relations – principally, the rise of feminism and the Sexual Revolution – that would transform American life in the 1960s. Hansberry explores controversial issues like abortion (which was illegal in 1959), the value of marriage, and morphing gender roles for women and men. Each of the Youngers takes a different attitude towards shifting gender roles, and the characters' perspectives shed light on their identities. Beneatha, who Hansberry said was partly based on herself, holds the most modern views, pursuing her dream to become a doctor (a male-dominated profession at the time) and telling a shocked Mama and Ruth that she isn't concerned about marriage—and that she might not ever get married at all. Beneatha's brother, Walter Lee, repeatedly criticizes his sister's ambition to become a doctor, suggesting that she "just get married." Beneatha's conviction to her modernized worldview highlights her unique brand of strength, perhaps also serving as an indirect expression of Hansberry's own opinions.

Mama and Ruth share more traditional views on marriage and their role as women. Both characters work in traditionally female roles as domestic servants, one of the few jobs open to African-American women at the time. Similarly, Walter Lee holds conventional views on gender, and his ability to adequately fulfill his role as a man greatly affects his self-esteem. Walter links his own identity and self-worth to his sense of "manhood," which ebbs and flows during the play. Walter resents his emasculating work as a white man's chauffeur and Mama's standing as "head" of the family, which confines him to the position of a "child" in his home. Mama's eventual decision to make Walter head of the family "like you supposed to be," along with Walter's courageous refusal of Karl Lindner's offer, prompt Mama and Ruth to note that Walter "finally come into his manhood today." Thus, Walter's status as a man parallels both his success as the "man" of the house *and* his ability to establish himself as an equal in his interactions with Lindner and others.

MONEY

Money provides a constant source of conflict and preoccupation in the Younger household. Within moments of the play's opening, Walter Lee asks Ruth, "Check coming today?" in reference to the insurance payment that his mother, Lena, is due to receive as a result of her husband's death. The members of the Younger family view money in different ways, with Mama, Beneatha, and Ruth imagining money as a means to an end and Walter thinking of it as an end in itself. Mama sees the insurance payment as a way to fulfill her dream of owning a house, which symbolizes her deep-seated yearning for "freedom" from racial persecution. Similarly, Beneatha dreams of the money as a way to fund her medical schooling, which embodies her desire to overcome racism and sexism.

On the other hand, Walter fantasizes about the way in which money would increase his social standing and allow him to acquire the material markers of class. Without room for advancement in his low-paying job as a chauffeur, Walter is continually frustrated by his inability to fulfill the masculine role of financial provider for his family, a failing that sends his self-esteem into a nosedive. Yet despite his temptation to accept Karl Lindner's sizeable bribe at the end of the play, Walter has an abrupt change of heart and ultimately rejects the offer, stating, "We have decided to move into our home because my father—my father—he earned it for us brick by brick." Reclaiming his pride, Walter finds the strength to refuse Lindner's enticing but degrading offer, instead choosing to move to the house purchased with money "made out of my father's flesh."

SYMBOLS

Symbols appear in blue text throughout the Summary and Analysis sections of this LitChart.

MAMA'S PLANT

Mama's feeble plant represents her family's deferred dreams for a better future, which have struggled to survive under the strain of life in Chicago's South Side. Mama's unending devotion to her small houseplant signifies her constant care for her family and her attention to its dreams. "Growing doggedly" in a small pot by the apartment's kitchen window, Mama's plant has "spirit," despite the fact that "this little old plant . . . ain't never had enough sunshine or nothing." Like the plant, the Youngers have struggled to overcome the circumstances, such as racial prejudice, that curb their growth and social mobility. Mama dreams of owning a house with a small garden, and until the play's conclusion her plant is as "close as I ever got" to achieving that dream. In the final moments of the play, Mama picks up her plant and leaves the South Side apartment for the last time, showing that this symbol of perseverance will accompany the family as it faces new challenges in Clybourne Park.

BENEATHA'S HAIR

Beneatha's natural hair symbolizes her pride in her African heritage and her desire to explore her African roots. After Joseph Asagai refers to Beneatha's Caucasian-style straightened hair as "mutilated," Beneatha reevaluates the significance of her "assimilationist" hairstyle and decides to cut her hair and wear it in its natural form. While Ruth, Walter, and George Murchison are flabbergasted by

Beneatha's abrupt decision to wear her hair "all nappy like that," Beneatha sees her new hairstyle as a way to distance herself from "the dominant, and in this case *oppressive*" mainstream culture and to fully embrace her African heritage. With her natural hair, Beneatha proudly marks herself as an anti-assimilationist and visibly expresses her racial identity. Her decision foreshadows the "Natural Hair" movement that many young African Americans embraced in the 1960s, which championed the beauty of African-American hair.

THE INSURANCE PAYMENT

The insurance payment that results from Big Walter's death illustrates the tremendous sacrifice that makes at least some of the Youngers' dreams a reality. As Mama tells Ruth, Big Walter "finally worked hisself to death" in an effort to support his family financially, procuring a $10,000 life insurance policy that would provide for his family after his death. In the hope of helping his children achieve their dreams, Big Walter sacrificed himself to give his family the opportunity for a better life. Knowing that racial prejudice prevented him from obtaining a house and a fulfilling job during his own lifetime, Big Walter's sacrifice symbolizes the efforts that generations of African Americans made to give their children's dreams a chance for success. The extreme nature of Big Walter's sacrifice shows the extent to which racism limited African Americans' opportunities for social advancement, but the insurance payment also gives purpose to Big Walter's death and epitomizes the hope and dignity of the Younger family. Conversely, the frequent arguments between the Youngers that result from the insurance payment signify the divisive power of money.

QUOTES

Note: all page numbers for the quotes below refer to the Vintage edition of *A Raisin in the Sun* published in 2004.

Act 1, Scene 1 Quotes

❝ Walter: See there, that just goes to show you what women understand about the world. Baby, don't *nothing* happen for you in this world 'less you pay *somebody* off!
Ruth: Walter, leave me alone! Eat your eggs, they gonna be cold.
Walter: That's it. There you are. Man say to his woman: I got me a dream. His woman say: Eat your eggs. Man say: I got to take hold of this here world, baby! And a woman will say: Eat your eggs and go to work. Man say: I got to change my life, I'm choking to death, baby! And his woman say – Your eggs is getting cold!

Related Characters: Walter Lee Younger, Ruth Younger (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 33-34

Explanation and Analysis

This quote occurs midway through a discussion between Walter Younger and his wife Ruth. Their son Travis has gone to school and Ruth cooks breakfast for Walter. As she cooks, Walter tells Ruth that he hopes to use his deceased father's $10,000 life insurance money to invest in a down payment on a liquor store with his friends, Willy Harris and Bobo. Ruth is wary of the investment. She doesn't trust Willy and Bobo and continuously evades discussing the prospect of Walter using his father's money on an investment. She finally tells him to leave her alone and he reacts with frustration at both his wife and his own position in life; a black man in the 1950's trying to provide for his family.

This is the first time Hansberry touches on the idea of dreams and dreaming in *A Raisin In The Sun,*as well as differentiates between the dreams of men and the dreams of women. This scene highlights Walter's aspirations for wealth and thereby an escape from his family's poor Southside Chicago life. He is filled with hope and a deep longing for financial stability. This moment also underlines Walter's continual feeling of being out of control and at the mercy of others. He is a chauffeur for a wealthy white family, and his mother is the sole inheritor of the $10,000, and so she will ultimately have the final say. In the time-period of the play, men were expected to lead and provide for their families, so Walter, who is the only man in the family but neither the final decision-maker nor the primary breadwinner, feels emasculated. He needs dreams in order to survive and retain his dignity. Ruth on the other hand is pragmatic, as women had to be at the time. Her aspirations are less expansive. For her, survival means cooking breakfast, making sure her son gets to school and she and her husband get to work. Thus, she responds to Walter's big dreams with the utilitarian and simple task of "eat your eggs." As a woman (particularly a black woman) in this time period, she doesn't have room to dream the way Walter dreams.

❝ That is just what is wrong with the colored women in this world . . . Don't understand about building their men up and making 'em feel like they somebody. Like they can do something.

Related Characters: Walter Lee Younger (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 34

Explanation and Analysis

Just before this quote, Walter expressed frustration at Ruth telling him to "eat your eggs" instead of discussing his potential investment on a liquor store. After he explains why he wants to invest, Ruth tells him that the money he plans to use doesn't belong to him (it belongs to his mother). Walter responds with a moment of deep sensitivity. He explains that he wants a better life. He wants to be able to provide for his family. He goes on to tell Ruth that he has heard stories of the way "white people live" and wants a life like that. Ruth is tired of hearing these lofty dreams and tells Walter that he never really says anything new. He talks about his dreams and his place and she is seemingly bored and sick of it.

This quote is Walter's response. He tells Ruth that her refusal to take him or his dreams seriously is the problem with "colored women in this world." This highlights both the themes of race and gender in *A Raisin In The Sun.* In 1950s America, a woman's role was to uplift and support her husband. Ruth, in her stern and outspoken manner, is the antithesis of such behavior. Walter also draws a racial comparison suggesting that white women *do*behave in such a way, with the implication that it is this behavior of white women that helps white men to hold such positions of power.

Walter is frustrated by the position of black people in society and is also making fun of his wife for not fitting into the standard gender role of "mother" and "housewife." In his own way, Walter is trying to hash out why and how upward mobility seems so hard for black men. Yet in searching for something tangible to blame—and landing on black women as the cause—he fails to see the true cause: systemic racism that restricts the opportunities of black people and in doing so degrades their sense of dignity.

❝ Walter: 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 . . .
Beneatha: Well – you finally got it said . . . It took you three years but you finally got it said.

Related Characters: Walter Lee Younger, Beneatha Younger (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 38

Explanation and Analysis

In this quote, Walter chastises his 20-year-old sister Beneatha for wanting to be a doctor. Before this, Beneatha wakes up in the room she shares her mother and comes out to talk with her family. Already in a fit of frustration regarding the insurance money, Walter suggests that his mother will play favorites and give a portion of the $10,000 to Beneatha to finish her schooling. He is both frustrated that his mother holds control of the money and bitter that a portion of it will go to his sister.

This moment excavates themes of gender and feminism and dreams and dreaming. *A Raisin In The Sun* is set in the mid-1950s, a time where women weren't seen as leaders in the workplace. Instead of doctors, they were more commonly nurses. Instead of business owners, they were secretaries. Many were housewives and mothers. Beneatha challenges the socially constructed expectations of both her gender and her race. As a black woman pursuing a career in medicine, she fights stereotypes and aspires to go beyond what is culturally expected and even acceptable.

Beneatha and Walter are more similar than they both think. Both of their aspirations extend beyond what society expects of them. However, Walter sees Beneatha's role as exclusively mother and wife. Beneatha, on the other hand, doesn't take Walter's dream of opening a liquor store seriously. This moment is just the beginning of what will be an ongoing discourse between Walter and Beneatha regarding the validity of one another's dreams.

❝ Mama, something is happening between Walter and me. I don't know what it is – but he needs something – something I can't give him anymore. He needs this chance, Lena.

Related Characters: Ruth Younger (speaker), Lena Younger (Mama), Walter Lee Younger

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 42

Explanation and Analysis

This quote occurs during a conversation between Mama and Ruth. After breakfast, Walter exits the apartment and we are introduced to "Mama" or Lena Younger—Walter and Beneatha's mother. She enters complaining about how loudly Walter slammed the door, and then goes through a series of questions and commands. She checks in about how Walter is doing and makes jokes about her children. It becomes clear that the role of mother is etched in her soul. This seems appropriate as she remains mostly nameless throughout the play, primarily referred to as "Mama." In a moment alone, Ruth tells Mama that Beneatha and Walter have been fighting about the insurance money. Ruth then asks Mama how she actually plans on using that money. Mama dismisses this, but Ruth suggests that maybe gambling on the liquor store isn't necessarily a bad idea. Mama asks why she's changed her mind.

In response, Ruth suggests that she can't give Walter what he needs; a chance to fulfill his own dreams. Ruth is exhausted and tired of working for hardly any pay, and in this moment shares that she wants more for herself, in the same way Walter and Beneatha do. Except as as more traditional wife and mother, Ruth's dreams are her husband's dreams. She hopes to fix the problems in her marriage by helping Walter fulfill his dreams, and for this he needs the insurance money.

Mama: What is it you want to express?
Beneatha: Me! Don't worry – I don't expect you to understand.

Related Characters: Lena Younger (Mama), Beneatha Younger (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 48

Explanation and Analysis

This moment happens during a conversation between Beneatha, Ruth, and Mama. When Mama asks Beneatha about what time she's going to be home from school that evening, Beneatha tells Ruth and Mama that she is coming home late because she plans on taking her first guitar lesson after school. Mama goes on to tease Beneatha, telling her that she's flippant with her forms of "expression." First it was acting, followed by horse back riding, and now it's guitar. Mama hardly trusts that Beneatha will commit to this new hobby.

Beneatha defends herself by telling Mama that she doesn't "flit" but rather experiments with different forms of expression. Mama then asks her *what* she's trying to express. And Beneatha responds angrily with, "Me!"

Here we learn that Beneatha takes great pride in her self-expression and is in search of her own identity. Throughout the play she defines herself by her education, her dress, her activities and her connection to her African heritage. In this moment, Hansberry also highlights the generational differences between Mama and Beneatha. Mama doesn't understand Beneatha's need to express. Like Ruth, she is pragmatic and reserved. The only thing she expresses is her love for her family and staunch sense of survival. She fits the traditional 1950s mold of mother, and takes pride in that. Indeed, after this moment Mama immediately re-routes the conversation to George Murchison, Beneatha's suitor, pushing her to make a commitment to him, like a good woman should.

Act 1, Scene 2 Quotes

Asagai: You wear it well . . . very well . . . mutilated hair and all.
Beneatha: My hair – what's wrong with my hair?
Asagai: Were you born with it like that?
Beneatha: No . . . of course not.

Related Characters: Beneatha Younger, Joseph Asagai (speaker)

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 61

Explanation and Analysis

Directly before this quote we are introduced to Joseph Asagai, a friend of Beneatha's. Asagai, a Nigerian student, has returned from a trip to Canada and visits the Younger home to see Beneatha. When he arrives he gifts Beneatha traditional Nigerian robes. Asagai then comments on Beneatha's hair. She asks him what's wrong with it, and he tells her it isn't "natural." Beneatha replies that it's easier to manage longer, permed hair. Asagai teases her, saying that he's shocked that she would "mutilate" her natural hair for the sake of ease.

Here, Hansberry touches on the themes of assimilation, discrimination, gender, and feminism. Beneatha's constant

change of interests and hobbies represents more than a search for expression; she is also in search of her own identity. Beneatha represents the identity struggle many black people faced and continue to face in America. It is racist society that has dictated that Beneatha's natural hair is unruly and messy. In Asagai's view, by perming her hair Beneatha is assimilating to American cultural standards of beauty, which are grounded in whiteness and what white people consider attractive or appealing. Beneatha's straight hair, although also possibly more manageable, mostly symbolizes her desire to fit in with white culture.

This also brings up questions of gender and feminism in *A Raisin In The Sun*. Like Ruth's quote about Walter eating his eggs earlier in Act I, Beneatha's response to Asagai's comments about her hair are pragmatic. Straightening her hair is easier than letting it be natural. It's a utilitarian choice. Furthermore, it's important to note that only women's hair is discussed in the play. Even though Asagai's comments are aimed at empowering Beneatha to be a strong black woman, the discussion of hair and her physical attributes of beauty indicate the gender roles and standards of the time. In her interaction with Asagai, there is more discussion about Beneatha's hair than there is about her becoming a doctor.

❝ Mama: Oh – So now it's life. Money is life. Once upon a time freedom used to be life – now it's money. I guess the world really do change . . .
Walter: No – it was always money, Mama. We just didn't know about it.
Mama: No . . . something has changed. You something new, boy. In my time we was worried about not being lynched and getting to the North if we could and how to stay alive and still have a pinch of dignity too . . .

Related Characters: Lena Younger (Mama), Walter Lee Younger (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 74

Explanation and Analysis

This quote occurs during a discussion between Mama and Walter. Before this quote, Mama tells Walter that she's concerned that he may be cheating on Ruth; he's constantly out of the house and is very secretive with his family. Walter tells Mama that he isn't cheating on his wife but rather searching for "peace." He is restless. Walter explains that he sees a bright future in front of him, and investing in a liquor store is the only way he knows how to reach it. Walter goes on to tell Mama that sometimes, when he walks down the Chicago streets, he sees white men through the windows of restaurants having business meetings. He wants that. Mama replies by asking him why he talks about money so much. Walter retorts, "Because it is life."

Here Mama details the differences between her generation and her children's. She was a child at the turn of the century, a time when "freedom" meant something entirely different for black Americans. Mama's parents escaped slavery to provide her with a better life. Freedom for her meant not being lynched or killed for being black. Freedom has been redefined for her children, however. Rather than being freed from the physical chains of slavery, Walter is in pursuit of freedom from economic oppression. In Mama's perspective, Walter doesn't realize how lucky he is. He doesn't take pride in the four generations of slaves and indentured servants that fought for freedom so that he could have a better life. She is frustrated at his lack of dignity, ingratitude, and sense of privilege. By fighting for a better life, Mama gave Walter the freedom to dream bigger than she was ever able to, and now she can't quite understand why his dreams are based so much on financial wealth.

❝ Well – son, I'm waiting to hear you say something . . . I'm waiting to hear how you be your father's son. Be the man he was . . . Your wife say she going to destroy your child. And I'm waiting to hear you talk like him and say we a people who give children life, not who destroys them – I'm waiting to see you stand up and look like your daddy and say we done give one baby up to poverty and that we ain't going to give up nary another one . . .

Related Characters: Lena Younger (Mama) (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 75

Explanation and Analysis

Before this moment, Mama expresses that she's concerned that Walter is cheating on Ruth. Walter denies this, but reveals that he is in a troubling place in his life. He hasn't been cheating, but rather has been searching for answers. He is frustrated by his position in the world and feels like his dreams of financial wealth and a better life for his family will never be realized. Mama chastises Walter for seeing money as the ultimate form of freedom. Walter dismisses this,

telling Mama she doesn't understand what he's going through. At her wit's end, Mama finally reveals that Ruth is pregnant. She tells Walter that Ruth has been trying to tell him. but he hasn't been around or interested enough to listen. Mama then tells Walter that Ruth is considering aborting the baby. Walter argues that Ruth would never do that. Having overheard the conversation from her bedroom, Ruth immediately enters the room and tells Walter that she has put down a five dollar down payment for the procedure. In a moment of silence between Walter and Ruth, Mama tells Walter that this is the moment for him to "be a man." She implores him to live up to his father's legacy and convince Ruth to not go through with the abortion.

Mama takes great pride in her faith and moral ethics, and Ruth's abortion tests those. This is also another moment where Walter's masculinity is questioned. Mama asks Walter to take pride in his beliefs and his manhood and step up and be a leader and a father. This moment also highlights the way poverty impacts decisions like childbearing, and takes a toll on pride and honor. Ruth's abortion is a result of her poverty, not a choice she would make if the Younger family were financially stable. This moment symbolizes how poverty strips people of their own dignity and sense of self.

❝ Oh, dear, dear, dear! Here we go! A lecture on the African past! On our Great West African Heritage! In one second we will hear all about the great Ashanti empires; the great Songhay civilizations; and the great sculpture of Bénin – and then some poetry in the Bantu – and the whole monologue will end with the word *heritage*! Let's face it, baby, your heritage is nothing but a bunch of raggedy-assed spirituals and some grass huts!

Related Characters: George Murchison (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 81

Explanation and Analysis

Beneatha enters the living room, clad in the Nigerian robes that Asagai has given her. She changes the record Ruth is playing, saying "Enough of this assimilation junk," puts on a Nigerian record, and dances. Ruth teases Beneatha for her behavior, but Beneatha keeps dancing. Walter then enters the apartment after a night of drinking. He drunkenly dances along with Beneatha, and then turns to see George Murchison, Beneatha's suitor, at the door. Shocked by her appearance, George looks at Beneatha's robes and asks her to change. She then takes off the headdress to reveal natural, curly hair cut short. George and Ruth are stunned that Beneatha proudly wears her hair in its natural form. In a moment of awe, George says, "What have you done to your head?" Beneatha answers matter-of-factly that she's cut her hair off. George then tells Beneatha that she isn't making a statement—she's just being eccentric. Making a jab at George, Beneatha replies that she "hates assimilationist negroes," describing them (and thereby George) as people who give up their own culture to survive in an oppressive one. George replies with this quote, which infuriates Beneatha.

Here, George expresses his exhaustion with Beneatha's newfound "Back to Africa" sentiments, and even pokes fun at the heritage they share. In this moment, Hansberry distills an important cultural conversation that was happening during the time *A Raisin In The Sun* was written. In the 1950s and 60s, many Civil Rights leaders like Malcolm X reinforced the idea that black people should reclaim their African heritage. Many believed that assimilating to American culture meant assimilating to White culture, and thus submitting to the oppressor. However, others believed that in order to close the racial gap in America, people had to come together. Some simply felt that making a statement like Beneatha's was petty and unnecessary. George represents this group of people. He is in many ways self-hating and discriminatory against his own heritage. George prides himself on his education and upward mobility, and sees Beneatha's act of expression as childish and silly.

❝ George: You're all wacked up with bitterness, man.
Walter: And you – ain't you bitter, man? Ain't you just about had it yet? Don't you see no stars gleaming that you can't reach out and grab? You happy? – You contented son-of-a-bitch – you happy? You got it made? Bitter? Man, I'm a volcano. Bitter? Here I am a giant – surrounded by ants! Ants who can't even understand what it is the giant is talking about.

Related Characters: Walter Lee Younger, George Murchison (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 85

Explanation and Analysis

Just before this, Walter mocks George's appearance and then comments on the success of George's father. He hints that he has a business venture he wants to get into, and

would like to sit down with George to talk about it. George clearly dismisses Walter. This infuriates Walter, who retorts with a series of insults. Walter tells George that his education is pointless and all he is learning is to "talk proper and read books and wear them faggoty looking white shoes." George tells Walter that he's just bitter about his own lack of success. Walter, angrily expresses that he doesn't understand why people won't allow themselves to dream as big as he does. In his mind, George should also be bitter.Walter has dreams he can't touch and George chooses to ignore them. In Walter's perspective, George is an ant with small goals and small aspirations.

In this scene, Hansberry brings up themes of dreams, pride, and gender roles. George's blatant ignoring of Ruth (as he does earlier in the conversation) and engagement with Walter highlights different forms of disrespect. George doesn't bother paying attention to or listening to Ruth because she is a woman. On the other hand, he is also rude and sarcastic with Walter. This moment also highlights different types of pride. George's pride lies in his social standing, education, and assimilation into white society. Walter's pride is in his dreams. Both also hold pride in their manhood. Walter comments on George's clothes, hinting that they are flamboyant and feminine, while also referencing himself as a "volcano" as a means to reinforce his masculinity.

❝ Well – well! – All I can say is – if this is my time in life – *MY* TIME – to say good-bye – to these goddamned cracking walls! – and these marching roaches! – and this cramped little closet which ain't now or never was no kitchen! . . . then I say it loud and good, HALLELUJAH! AND GOOD-BYE MISERY . . . I DON'T NEVER WANT TO SEE YOUR UGLY FACE AGAIN!

Related Characters: Ruth Younger (speaker)

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 94

Explanation and Analysis

This quote occurs when Mama re-enters the house after being gone for several hours. Walter asks her where she's been, and she replies that she went downtown for "business," She calls Travis to the room and reveals to the family that she has used the insurance money to make a down payment on a house. Walter "turns away from all of them in fury" while Ruth, Travis, and Mama celebrate.

Mama then wails "Praise GOD" and asks Walter, who has been silent, to please be happy for her. Mama then describes the house in detail. Ruth asks Mama where the house is located, and Mama tells her it's in Clybourne park. Ruth is shocked, as Clybourne park is an all-white neighborhood. Mama replies that it was the nicest and cheapest house she could find. Ruth recovers and says the following quote with excitement and joy. She expresses her joy to be leaving their tiny apartment and screams goodbye to the pain and tumult the Younger family faced while living there.

In this moment we see one of Ruth's dreams come to fruition. She is thrilled to say goodbye to her two-bedroom Southside Chicago home and move forward, to a better home and a better life for Travis and her unborn child. Here, Hansberry suggests that the decision to have an abortion was a product of Ruth's poverty, not her will. This is another moment of female pragmatism and self sacrifice for the family.Furthermore, in an act of empowerment, Mama has made the decision to spend the insurance money on a new home. She has solidified herself as head of household, something uncommon during the 1950s.

❝ Son – you – you understand what I done, don't you? I – I just seen my family falling apart today . . . just falling to pieces in front of my eyes . . . We couldn't of gone on like we was today. We was going backwards 'stead of forwards – talking 'bout killing babies and wishing each other was dead . . . When it gets like that in life – you just got to do something different, push on out and do something bigger.

Related Characters: Lena Younger (Mama) (speaker), Walter Lee Younger

Related Themes:

Page Number: 94

Explanation and Analysis

This quote occurs directly after Mama reveals that she has used the insurance money for a down payment on a new house for the family in Clybourne Park. Walter has said very little at this point and is furious that Mama chose to use the money in this way. In this moment Mama is trying to level with Walter. She explains that this day was a low point for the Younger family. She saw her daughter-in-law consider

aborting her unborn child, she saw her children fighting about money, she saw her daughter struggle with her identity, and thought that her son wasn't going to make it through. She saw the effects that poverty and oppression can have on people. The choice to buy a home was Mama's effort to save her family.

Mama's strength and Walter's silence highlight the way many of the characters challenge and face gender roles in *A Raisin In The Sun*.Mama has taken control of the insurance money and has made an executive decision. This infuriates Walter. Much of his pride is bound up in his manhood and sense of masculinity. Throughout the play he has expressed his resentment of his inability to control his own life and provide for his family. By calling the shots, Mama has emasculated him once again. In Walter's perspective, she has stripped Walter of his choice and leadership—but for Mama, her decision to buy the house was also a choice to restore her family's dignity. The events of the day were the last straw for her and she tried to fix the problem the only way she knew how.

> I say I been wrong, son. That I been doing to you what the rest of the world been doing to you. Walter – what you ain't never understood is that I ain't got nothing, don't own nothing, ain't never really wanted nothing that wasn't for you. . . . There ain't nothing worth holding on to, money, dreams, nothing else – if it means – if it means it's going to destroy my boy. . . . I'm telling you to be the head of this family from now on like you supposed to be.

Related Characters: Lena Younger (Mama) (speaker), Walter Lee Younger

Related Themes:

Page Number: 106

Explanation and Analysis

In this moment, Mama tells Walter that she finally understands where his anger and frustration is coming from. Before this quote, Mama used her deceased husband's life insurance money for a down payment on a new house in Clybourne Park. Mrs. Arnold, Walter's boss, then calls to tell Walter that if he doesn't show up for work tomorrow he will be fired. Ruth and Mama learn that Walter hasn't been to work in three days. Mama asks Walter what he's been doing, and Walter tells her that he's been borrowing Willy Harris' car, driving through Illinois, and drinking at The Green Hat—a Jazz club—every afternoon. He has given up on his job and, in many ways, himself. He is lost.

This moment reveals Walter's complete loss of pride and deep need for escape. Mama blames herself and tells Walter that she was the one who did this to him. Here, Hansberry touches on the gender roles put in place during the time period in which *A Raisin In The Sun* was written. By taking control of the insurance money, Mama has emasculated Walter. He is the man, and so by cultural standards is supposed to be the "head of household," and the one to decide how to allocate finances. Mama laments that she has been doing "what the rest of the world been doing,"—depriving Walter of his manhood and keeping him from his dreams and his pride. After she says this she hands Walter the $6,500 left over from the down payment on the house. Mama asks him to put some away for Beneatha's schooling and use the rest however he wants, even for his investment on the liquor store. Mama has relinquished her role and, in order to save Walter, offers him control over the money.

Act 2, Scene 3 Quotes

> But you've got to admit that a man, right or wrong, has the right to want to have a neighborhood he lives in a certain kind of way. And at the moment the overwhelming majority of our people out there feel that people get along better, take more of a common interest in the life of the community, when they share a common background. I want you to believe me when I tell you that race prejudice simply doesn't enter into it. It is a matter of the people of Clybourne Park believing, rightly or wrongly, as I say, that for the happiness of all concerned that our Negro families are happier when they live in their *own* communities.

Related Characters: Karl Lindner (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 117-118

Explanation and Analysis

This quote is spoken by Mr. Lindner, a representative from the Clybourne Park Improvement Association. Before this moment, the Youngers have been riding the coattails of the excitement that came from Mama's purchase of the new house. As they celebrate, Mr. Lindner knocks on the door. He comes into the Younger home to tell them that the homeowners of Clybourne Park are uncomfortable with a "different" family moving in—so much so that they are

offering to purchase the house from the Younger family at a higher price than what they've paid. This is an effort to maintain Clybourne Park as a community of people with "common interests," or simply put: to make sure that black people do not move in.

Although not outwardly derogatory, Mr. Lindner's efforts to maintain racial segregation in Clybourne Park are inherently racist. The white families of Clybourne Park do not see black people as equals and thereby do not believe that they deserve to live in their neighborhoods. Mr. Lindner tries to be as politically correct as possible, but the message is clear: the status quo in Clybourne Park is that of white supremacy, and the members of the community want to maintain that status quo. Although sugar coated in flowery language and nervousness, Mr.Lindner symbolizes the abundant discrimination and racism of American society in the 1950s—racism that exhibited itself in many ways, not just in outright violence or insulting language.

❝ Man, I trusted you . . . Man, I put my life in your hands . . . Man . . . THAT MONEY IS MADE OUT OF MY FATHER'S FLESH –

Related Characters: Walter Lee Younger (speaker), Walter Younger (Big Walter), Willy Harris

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 128

Explanation and Analysis

During this quote, Bobo, Walter's business partner, comes to the Younger home to relay some news. Directly before this moment, Walter has been celebrating his investment on the liquor store with his family, regaling them with fantasies of fine clothes and celebrating the future. Bobo then enters and nervously tells Walter that he was supposed to meet Willy Harris to get the liquor license, but Willy never showed up. Bobo also tells Walter that Willy was the one who had all of the money. Bobo hasn't been able to reach Willy since. The money is gone.

Walter grabs Bobo by the collar and shakes him furiously. He is in shock and doesn't know what to do with himself. He tells Bobo that the money was his entire life. It was the money he inherited from his dead father, his very "flesh." Walter then reveals to the family that he gave Willy the entire $6,500 of insurance money instead of putting some away for Beneatha.

Here Walter's dreams are shattered. Throughout the play his pride and manhood have been questioned and tirelessly compared to his father's. Here he realizes that the money was the last bit of his father's legacy, and it was also the last bit of Walter's pride. The money and the investment meant freedom for himself and his family, as well as his only opportunity to exercise choice and power. Now Walter is left with nothing, as his own ambition has gotten in the way of his father's dream for his family to have a better life.

Act 3 Quotes

❝ Independence *and then what?* What about all the crooks and thieves and just plain idiots who will come into power and steal and plunder the same as before – only now they will be black and do it in the name of the new Independence – WHAT ABOUT THEM?!

Related Characters: Beneatha Younger (speaker)

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 134

Explanation and Analysis

Before this quote, Asagai has returned to the Younger home to help Beneatha with packing for the big move. Beneatha tells Asagai that Walter has lost rest of the insurance money. Asagai asks her how this makes her feel, and she replies, "Me, I'm nothing." Beneatha tells Asagai that when she was a child, she discovered she wanted to be a doctor when she saw a little boy get badly cut on the face while sledding. She realized then that "fixing" someone else was the most "marvelous thing in the world." Beneatha goes on to tell Asagai that after today, she's learned that there are things in this world that can't be fixed. Mankind is sick with something that seems incurable. Asagai tries to help, but Beneatha tells him that his "Back to Africa" ideals are silly and that they won't cure anything. Asagai is the ultimate idealist, but what comes after his ideas of independence? What is the point of fighting if people don't seem to ever change?

Here we see Beneatha's tenacity and passion for self-discovery deflated by the loss of the insurance money. Without the money for her education she feels aimless, like

she has lost who she is, and the result of this is that she feels betrayed by humanity itself.

Then isn't there something wrong in a house – in a world! – where all dreams, good or bad, must depend on the death of a man? I never thought to see *you* like this, Alaiyo.

Related Characters: Joseph Asagai (speaker), Beneatha Younger

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 135

Explanation and Analysis

This quote happens after Beneatha tells Asagai that she has given up on her dreams of becoming a doctor. She has also, in many ways, lost hope in the world. She no longer believes that humanity can be cured of its problems.

Always an optimist and idealist, Asagai tells Beneatha that the first step for change is acting, having a voice. Beneatha tells him that nothing has changed, and that "there is only one large circle that we march in, around and around," and that dreams are all a "mirage".

Asagai argues that life isn't a circle but rather a long line. "We cannot see the end" or how it will change—we cannot see our dreams but they are there. Asagai then tells Beneatha that the money didn't belong to her, she has lived without it and wouldn't have had it at all if her father hadn't died. He even calls into question the morality of a dream built upon a man's death. Asagai is disappointed by Beneatha's aspirations for wealth and how easily her dreams have deteriorated—if her dreams were purer and stronger, Asagai seems to argue, they wouldn't be affected by such setbacks.

Don't you see that they will be young men and women – not British soldiers then, but my own black countrymen – to step out of the shadows some evening and slit my then useless throat? Don't you see they have always been there . . . that they will always be. And that such a thing as my own death will be an advance?

Related Characters: Joseph Asagai (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 136

Explanation and Analysis

This quote happens after Asagai tells Beneatha that he never expected her to cower when things got tough. He is saddened and shocked that she has placed so much weight on her dead father's insurance money. There is something disconcerting about dreams that only exist because someone has died.

Beneatha challenges him, saying that she doesn't understand why he continues to work toward the impossible. Why does he continue to work toward aspirations that may never be realized? Asagai answers with "I Live the Answer!" He tells her that in his village in Nigeria,*freedom* is the ability to read and write. It isn't money or a house or a college education. He goes on to tell Beneatha that one day he will go home and people won't be able to understand what he is saying. But he will continue to teach and work until someone *does*. This may cause him to be killed by people who don't agree with him, or it may not. He may enact change or he may not. But he will incite others to speak and that possibility, the possibility of moving others to continue to fight and change the world is the important thing.

This is a key moment in the discussion of race and discrimination in *A Raisin In The Sun*. Asagai speaks about legacy and the unknown, and how change, while often slow-moving, can happen. He represents the idealist and is an important voice in the narrative of the black community; an argument to keep fighting, keep learning, keep struggling to improve one's life.

Talking 'bout life, Mama. . . . Mama, you know it's all divided up. Life is. Sure enough. Between the takers and the "tooken." I've figured it out finally. Yeah. Some of us always getting "tooken."

Related Characters: Walter Lee Younger (speaker), Lena Younger (Mama)

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 141

Explanation and Analysis

Before this quote Mama tells the family that she doesn't think it's wise to move to Clybourne Park anymore. Ruth begs her not to make that decision. She tells Mama that she will work twenty hours a day with her newborn baby on her back but she must leave their Southside Chicago apartment. Walter enters and tells Mama and Ruth that he has made a call to "The Man" (Mr. Lindner). He is going to invite him back to the house to do business with him. He goes on to say that he's realized that life is about people who take and people who are taken *from*. He then goes on to tell Mama and Ruth that he is going to "put on a show" for Lindner, perform as the stereotypical black man and give him what he wants to see, hoping that Lindner will pay a larger amount of money for the house so that the Youngers will make back the $10,000 they've lost.

Here, Walter reasserts himself as the head of household. He also finally admits, although in a roundabout way, that he made a poor decision by giving up a large portion of the insurance money. This is his effort to fix the problem he's caused. However in doing so, by degrading himself before Mr. Lindner Walter is also stripping himself of his own identity, assimilating to the image of an inferior stereotype.

❝ Son – I come from five generations of people who was slaves and sharecroppers – but ain't nobody in my family never let nobody pay 'em no money that was a way of telling us we wasn't fit to walk the earth. We ain't never been that poor. We ain't never been that – dead inside.

Related Characters: Lena Younger (Mama) (speaker), Walter Lee Younger

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 143

Explanation and Analysis

Before this quote, Walter tells Mama that he has called Mr. Lindner and asked him to return to discuss the house in Clybourne Park Mama has just purchased. Walter plans on striking a deal with Lindner and "putting on a show" for him. Mama is disappointed that Walter would belittle his pride and self-respect for a profit. She's devastated that Walter would even consider pretending to be the type of man Lindner and the white community of Clybourne park has stereotyped him to be.

For Mama, allowing themselves to be kicked out of Clybourne Park for being black, and taking a bribe to leave, is an act of submissiveness to the oppressor. They are giving into the pressures of a community of people who don't see them as equals. Here, Mama reminds Walter of her and thereby *his*history. Although their ancestors weren't free by law, they had pride and would never let anyone pay them money to admit that, by being black, they were inherently lesser or unequal. Self-respect is Mama's moral compass. Even though her life is unfair, her pride and dignity will always come first.

❝ Have you cried for that boy today? I don't mean for yourself and for the family 'cause we lost the money. I mean for him: what he been through and what it done to him. Child, when do you think is the time to love somebody the most? When they done good and made things easy for everybody? Well then, you ain't through learning – because that ain't the time at all. It's when he's at his lowest and can't believe in hisself 'cause the world done whipped him so!

Related Characters: Lena Younger (Mama) (speaker), Walter Lee Younger, Beneatha Younger

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 145

Explanation and Analysis

This quote happens after Walter tells the family that he has asked Mr.Lindner to return to discuss striking a deal. Walter plans to negotiate with Lindner and try to make the money that he lost on his liquor store investment back.

Mama and Beneatha are devastated by this. Beneatha criticizes Walter for stooping so low that he would make a deal with a man who sees them as unfit to live in his community. Mama then reprimands Beneatha for her lack of empathy. She is upset that her children have been so selfish. Mama explains that she thought that she taught her children to love each other no matter what. In a time when the Younger family has had to face so much prejudice for simply being who they are, Mama begs Beneatha to love and empathize with her brother. He doesn't have anyone

else, and in the face of so much poverty, racism, and bad luck, the family has to stick together.

> And we have decided to move into our house because my father – my father – he earned it for us brick by brick. We don't want to make no trouble for nobody or fight no causes, and we will try to be good neighbors. And that's *all* we got to say about that. We don't want your money.

Related Characters: Walter Lee Younger (speaker), Walter Younger (Big Walter)

Related Themes:    

Related Symbols: 

Page Number: 148

Explanation and Analysis

Mr. Lindner arrives back at the Younger home and expresses that he's happy that Walter has changed his mind about re-selling their new house in Clybourne Park. Walter asks Travis to go downstairs but Mama makes him stay, telling Walter she wants Travis to see what is going to happen, "where our five generations done come to." Nervously, Walter goes on to explain to Mr. Lindner that he comes from a long line of people with a lot of pride. He calls Travis over and explains that Travis will be the sixth generation of Youngers in America. Then, in an act of sudden bravery, Walter tells Lindner that they will keep the Clybourne Park house. Walter explains that his father earned that house and died for that house. His family has worked for five generations for that house, and they deserve it just as much as anyone else, white or black.

Walter completely shifts his outlook on pride in this moment. Instead of seeing success and pride as linked to monetary wealth, he realizes that it is the groundwork of the people before him, the pride and dignity of his father and the generations before him, that are important. With his son—a symbol of the future—on his lap, Walter shows unwavering commitment to his family and his history, even in the face of the full power of institutional racism.

> He finally come into his manhood today, didn't he? Kind of like a rainbow after the rain . . .

Related Characters: Lena Younger (Mama) (speaker), Walter Lee Younger

Related Themes: 

Page Number: 151

Explanation and Analysis

After Mr. Lindner leaves and the moving trucks are packed, Mama has a moment alone with Ruth before leaving their apartment for the last time. She tells Ruth that she thinks Walter has finally come into his own manhood. Like a rainbow after a storm, Walter's mistakes brought him closer to his own sense of self as well as giving him a newfound pride in his history and identity. After this moment, Mama takes one final look at the apartment, and she stares at her plant sitting on the table. She feels an overwhelming wave of an undefined emotion (pain? sadness? fear?) and sticks her fist in her mouth to hide the scream welling up inside her. The lights dim and then re-light as she comes back into the space to grab her beloved plant. She leaves and the play ends.

Here, although she never says it directly to him, Mama finally recognizes Walter as a man. After creating a massive problem for the family in losing their money, he has made the final decision to move the family to Clybourne park. Putting his family's best interest first, this decision was in an effort to provide a better life for Travis and to prove that the Younger family never has and never will stand down in the face of oppression. While she's proud of Walter, in this moment we also see Mama overcome with emotion. Here, Hansberry hints that although the rainbow has arrived, more rain may still be on its way.

SUMMARY AND ANALYSIS

The color-coded icons under each analysis entry make it easy to track where the themes occur most prominently throughout the work. Each icon corresponds to one of the themes explained in the Themes section of this LitChart.

ACT 1, SCENE 1

The curtain rises to reveal the Younger family's living room in its modest home in Chicago's Southside. It is seven-thirty and still "morning dark" inside the clean but cramped apartment. The "primary feature" of the room is its atmosphere of having accommodated "the living of too many people for too many years." Although its furnishings were once chosen "with love and even hope," an aura of "weariness has . . . won in this room." As evidence of the apartment's overcrowding, a young boy, Travis, sleeps on a "make-down bed" at center stage.

The weary and careworn appearance of the Youngers' living room draws attention to the family's working-class status. The room's "tired" furnishings, once chosen with care and pride, highlight the family's long dissolved dreams for its cramped home. Nonetheless, the meticulously cleaned room and furnishings still manifest the dignity of the Younger family.

An alarm clock rings and Ruth enters. She crosses to the small window in the cramped kitchen area and raises the shade that covers the room's sole source of natural light. A "dusky" light shines "feebly" into the apartment, and while Ruth begins preparing breakfast, she calls to her son Travis to wake up. After her calls are ignored, Ruth goes over to Travis and finally shakes him out of bed, sending him off to the hallway bathroom before one of the neighbor's can occupy it.

As the first of the Youngers to wake up in the morning, Ruth assumes the duties of a traditional mother, preparing meals for her family and helping her son get ready for school. The shared hallway bathroom offers another example of the Youngers' modest financial situation.

Ruth's husband Walter Lee enters from the bedroom, and almost immediately he mentions the "check" that the family is expecting the next day. Ruth answers impatiently that it's too early to start discussing money, which sparks tension with her husband. While Ruth prepares breakfast, the couple continues bickering over yesterday's late-night gathering that Walter held for his friends in his son's makeshift "bedroom." Walter dismisses his wife's complaints by saying that "colored [women] . . . [is] some eeeevil people at eight o'clock in the morning."

Walter's immediate reference to the coming "check" emphasizes the family's preoccupation with money. Ruth's complaints about her son's makeshift bedroom also relate directly to the family's strained finances. Walter's comment on "colored" women speaks to his own insecurities regarding his shaky sense of manhood and also hints at the ways that hardship can make people blame each other.

Travis returns from the bathroom and signals for his father to get inside before one of the neighbors beats him to it. Travis begins eating his breakfast and, like Walter, also asks his mother about the check that is scheduled to arrive tomorrow. Travis reminds his mother that he is supposed to bring 50 cents to school this morning, to which Ruth answers that she "ain't got no fifty cents" today. Travis persists in asking for the money and, exasperated, Ruth refuses and tells her son to be quiet. Angered by his mother's resistance, Travis heads for the door, but before he can leave for school, Ruth gently teases him and asks for a good-bye kiss. Travis' frustration fades, and mother and son embrace and reconcile.

Travis' mention of the anticipated check shows that the family's financial concerns extend to its youngest member. Travis finds his mother's refusal to give him the 50 cents that he needs for school extremely frustrating and embarrassing, since it means that he will have to reveal his family's economic struggles to his teacher and classmates. Nonetheless, familial love reconciles mother and son after financial strain divides them.

Walter reenters and, hearing the tail end of the argument between his wife and son, gives Travis a *dollar* to take to school, which greatly angers Ruth. Walter's defiance of Ruth's decision provokes further conflict between husband and wife. In particular, Ruth criticizes Walter's friend Willy Harris and his business schemes, the latest being a liquor store that Harris has asked Walter to invest in. Walter asks Ruth to try to persuade his mother, Lena, to use part of the coming check to invest in the store. Ruth resists the idea and tells Walter to "eat your eggs." In response, Walter erupts, accusing his wife of hampering his dreams. Ruth "wearily" explains her indifference by telling Walter that he simply "never say nothing new." Walter retorts, saying that "colored women . . . don't understand about building their men up."

Unable to stomach the loss of pride that would come with the denial of his son's request, Walter shortsightedly gives Travis more money than the family can spare. Fixated on the dream of providing a stable financial future for his family, Walter begs his wife to support him in his ambition to open a liquor store. When Ruth expresses doubts about the security of such an investment, Walter lashes out with criticism of African-American women in general, redirecting his own anxieties towards his wife and blaming her for his failings as a male provider.

Walter's sister Beneatha enters from the stage-left bedroom in the midst of Walter and Ruth's quarrel. As Ruth irons a massive pile of clothes, Walter badgers his sister about her decision to study medicine and the high cost of her schooling. Beneatha counters sharply and impatiently, and when Walter brings up the coming check, Beneatha quickly and decisively reminds Walter, "That money belongs to Mama." Walter "bitterly" snaps back, pointing to Beneatha's own hope that Mama will devote a portion of the check to her tuition. Walter tells Beneatha to "stop acting holy" and acknowledge the "sacrifices" that he and the rest of the family have made so that Beneatha can go to school. Beneatha, in a semi-mocking tone of gratitude, drops to her knees and cries, "Forgive me for ever wanting to be anything at all!"

Walter's critique of his sister's dream highlights his traditional view of gender roles, which Beneatha and her professional ambition challenge. The issue of money, embodied by the check, again serves as a point of conflict for the family members. Walter laments the high cost of Beneatha's tuition, which would divert money away from his dream of opening a liquor store. Beneatha's tongue-in-cheek apology for "ever wanting to be anything at all" underlines her pride in her dream and her dismissal of the expectation that women should give up their own dreams and instead just support men.

Walter goes on to suggest that his sister abandon her dream of becoming a doctor in favor of being "a nurse like other women," or simply getting married. Beneatha responds by telling Walter, "Thee is mad, boy." Following his argument with Beneatha, Walter "slams out of the house" on his way to work. However, a few moments later, Walter reenters, fumbling with his hat, and tells Ruth that he needs "some money for carfare," having given his last cent to Travis earlier. Ruth gives the money to her husband and in a "teasing, but tenderly" manner says, "Here, take a taxi!"

Walter's attempt to convince his sister to sideline her dream reflects his uncompromising stance on gender and his determination to secure Mama's money in order to fund his own dream. Walter's re-entrance to ask for carfare recalls his imprudent decision to give Travis his money—foreshadowing future poor decision-making around money—and Ruth's reaction shows that she facilitates Walter's irresponsibility with money.

Mama enters from her bedroom and asks Beneatha and Ruth about the argument with Walter that she just overheard. When Beneatha exits to go to the bathroom, Ruth reveals that the siblings' argument had to do with "that money" that's arriving in tomorrow's check. Ruth asks Mama if she has decided what to do with the money and encourages her to consider investing in Walter's liquor store venture, adding that African Americans need to "start gambling" on such ventures if they want to get ahead in life. Mama dismisses the idea, stating, "We ain't no business people." Mama asks Ruth about her sudden support for Walter's investment scheme, to which Ruth answers that "something is happening" between the couple and that Walter "needs this chance" to restore his self-esteem and repair the rift in their marriage.

In a drastic change from her earlier conversation with Walter, Ruth tries to convince her mother-in-law to use the money from the check in order to fund Walter's dream, hoping that the fulfillment of her husband's ambition will give him the confidence boost needed to fix their marriage. Mama's response – "We ain't no business people" – takes on a racial dimension in contrast to Ruth's statement that African Americans need to start taking chances in business in order to better their standing in society.

Studying Ruth's tired face, Mama suggests that Ruth call in sick to work today, an idea that Ruth swiftly refuses, stating that the family "need[s] the money." With the mention of money, the conversation promptly circles back to the anticipated check, which Mama reveals is a $10,000 insurance payment resulting from her husband's recent death. Mama declares that some of the money must be set aside for Beneatha's schooling. As for the remaining amount, Mama "tentatively" begins to tell Ruth of her and her late husband Big Walter's deferred dream of buying a house. Mama suggests that she might use part of the insurance money as a down payment on a "little old two-story somewhere, with a yard where Travis could play."

Big Walter's insurance policy represents the interconnectedness of the play's themes of money, dignity, and dreams. The cost of acquiring and maintaining the $10,000 policy during Big Walter's life would have placed a considerable financial burden on the man, although the policy now makes possible the fulfillment of at least some of his family's dreams. Through his death, Big Walter continues to provide for his family and helps to reinforce its sense of dignity and pride.

In a "reflective mood," Mama smiles and reminisces about her marriage, stating that she and Big Walter only intended to stay in their current apartment for "no more than a year." Growing sad at her "dissolved dream," Mama recalls the loss of her baby Claude and the difficulties of her marriage, including Big Walter's "wild" way with women. Mama states that, for all his faults, her husband "sure loved his children," and he often said, "Seem like God didn't see fit to give the black man nothing but dreams – but He did give us children to make them dreams seem worth while."

Mama betrays herself as a member of an older generation with different thoughts on marriage when she reveals that she tolerated her late husband's womanizing. Mama's remembrance of Big Walter's statement about the chronic deferment of the "black man['s]" dreams draws attention to the widespread racial inequalities and prejudices in America that limited African Americans' employment, educational, and housing opportunities.

Beneatha returns from the bathroom and angers Mama by "reciting the scriptures in vain" when she exclaims "Christ's sakes" in response to a neighbor's noisy vacuuming. Beneatha then mentions her after-school guitar lesson that evening, which provokes snide comments from Mama and Ruth, who proceed to rattle off the long list of Beneatha's discarded – and expensive – hobbies. Beneatha defends her experimentation with different hobbies as part of her effort to "express" herself, which prompts "raucous laughter" from Mama and Ruth.

Although Beneatha defends and takes pride in her quest for a form of personal "expression," Mama and Ruth can't help but laugh at Beneatha's youthful effort to define her identity, which represents an unimaginable luxury to these women of earlier, pre-feminist generations. The money devoted to Beneatha's hobbies underscores the family members' financial tug-of-war.

Mama then changes the subject to Beneatha's love life, asking whom she will go on a date with tomorrow night. "With displeasure," Beneatha says it will be George Murchison, a "rich" young man whom she condemns as "shallow." Ruth disagrees with Beneatha's dismissal of George, asking her, "What other qualities a man got to have" in addition to his wealth? Beneatha resists her sister-in-law's advice, affirming that she first and foremost intends to become a doctor and only then will she consider whom to marry – that is, "If I ever get married."

Ruth and Beneatha have a difference of opinion when it comes to the relevance of wealth in choosing a mate; however, Ruth's own decision to marry the working-class Walter shows that she hasn't necessarily heeded her own advice. In the face of societal – and familial – pressure to marry, Beneatha prioritizes her independence and freedom over love or the financial security that comes from marriage.

After recovering from the shock of Beneatha's comment, Mama says that Beneatha will certainly fulfill her dream of becoming a doctor, "God willing." Beneatha chafes at the mention of God, responding that divine will "doesn't have a thing to do with it." Beneatha continues, delivering a speech in which she coolly declares, "God is just one idea I don't accept." After absorbing the speech, Mama slowly crosses to Beneatha and "powerfully" slaps her, and then with "cool emotion" makes her repeat, "In my mother's house there is still God." Beneatha acquiesces and Mama exits. To Ruth, Beneatha calls Mama "a tyrant" before leaving for school.

Beneatha prides herself on the progress that she has made towards achieving her dream of becoming a doctor, which is why she resists Mama's suggestion that God has a role in the fulfillment of her ambition. On the other hand, Mama takes pride and finds strength in her religious convictions, which she has tried to instill in her children. Mama's reprimand of Beneatha signifies the pride that she takes in maintaining a certain type of home for her family. The entire exchange shows that Mama is still the leader of this family.

Mama reenters and expresses her deep concern for her children, telling Ruth, "There's something come down between me and them that don't let us understand each other." Tending to her struggling plant by the apartment's tiny window, she continues to think aloud and, with her back to Ruth, fails to realize that her daughter-in-law is growing faint. At last Mama turns to find that Ruth has "slipped" to the floor in a faint.

Mama's unending attention to her struggling houseplant symbolizes the pride that she takes in tending to her fractured family and maintaining its sense of dignity and integrity, despite the rough and suffocating conditions. Ruth's unexplained fainting ends the scene with a note of tension and uncertainty.

ACT 1, SCENE 2

The following Saturday morning Beneatha and Mama clean the apartment thoroughly, a regular occurrence in the Younger household. Travis asks his grandmother if he can go outside to play on the street, and Mama agrees, as long as he keeps a "good lookout" for the postman, who is supposed to deliver the insurance check that morning. After Travis exits, Beneatha asks Mama where Ruth is, and Mama says "with meaning" that Ruth has gone to the doctor, implying that Ruth is pregnant. The phone rings and interrupts their conversation.

The Youngers' Saturday morning ritual of cleaning the apartment shows the pride that the family takes in maintaining its home. The tantalizing arrival of the insurance check creates an expectant atmosphere. Similarly, the speculation over Ruth's pregnancy imbues the scene with a sense of anxiety and tension.

Beneatha answers the phone and has a brief conversation with her classmate, Joseph Asagai, who asks if he may visit Beneatha later that morning. Beneatha agrees. Beneatha explains to Mama that Asagai is a Nigerian student whom she met on campus and she asks Mama to refrain from asking "ignorant questions" about Africa when he comes to the apartment. Mama retorts, "Why should I know anything about Africa?"

Beneatha's request that her mother refrain from asking ignorant questions about Africa underscores the fact that many mid-century African Americans knew little about African life and culture. Furthermore, seeing themselves as Americans, some African Americans questioned why it was necessary to have extensive knowledge of Africa.

Ruth enters "forlornly" and confirms Mama's suspicion that she is pregnant. While Mama is overcome with "grandmotherly enthusiasm," Beneatha and Ruth worry about the financial strain that a child will place on the family. When Beneatha asks Ruth if she planned the pregnancy, Ruth dismisses the question, and Beneatha snaps, "Where is he [the unborn child] going to live, on the roof?" Beneatha then tries to backpedal, half-heartedly saying that the baby will be "wonderful."

Ruth's pregnancy is immediately coupled with economic concerns. Ruth bears the responsibility not only for literally carrying the child, but also for shouldering a significant part of the accompanying financial burden. Ruth and Beneatha, part of a younger generation of women, differ from Mama in their reactions to the news.

Suddenly, there is a "commotion" in the street, and Beneatha calls out of the window and orders Travis to come upstairs. While waiting for Travis, Mama asks Ruth about her visit to the doctor, and Ruth's use of the pronoun "she" to refer to the doctor makes Mama "immediately suspicious." Travis enters and breathlessly describes how he and his friends chased and killed a rat in the street. Travis' story brings his dispirited mother to tears. Seeing Ruth crying, Beneatha sends Travis back outside to play, "but not with any rats." Just then, Asagai rings the doorbell and enters, and Mama takes a fragile Ruth to her bedroom to rest.

Travis' story highlights the harshness of life in the segregated South Side of Chicago and reignites Ruth's fears that the family's current home is an unsuitable place for her son (or, now, her baby) to grow up. Ruth's maternal responsibilities force her to consider broader social forces at play. Mama, a traditionalist, senses from the fact that Ruth saw a woman doctor that Ruth may be thinking of doing something that perhaps a male, traditional doctor would not support—get an abortion.

Asagai notices that Beneatha looks rattled and asks if something is wrong, to which Beneatha says, "Yes . . . we've all got acute ghetto-itis." Asagai gives Beneatha a gift of records and traditional Nigerian robes. As Beneatha models the robes, he compliments her appearance, teasingly adding that she looks good even with "mutilated" hair. Beneatha is taken aback by this comment and explains that she straightens her hair because it is easier to manage that way. Asagai implies that Beneatha's straightened hairstyle marks her as an "assimilationist," which Beneatha resolutely denies. Asagai then expresses his romantic feelings for Beneatha, but about such feelings she responds, "By itself – it won't do."

Asagai's comments about Beneatha's hair make her question whether she is an Africanist or an assimilationist. Although Beneatha takes interest in her African heritage, her straightened hair projects a message of assimilation, of "managing" her black attributes to make it easier to fit in, which Beneatha abhors. Beneatha's hair is also tied to her identity as a woman and traditional – i.e., white – notions of feminine beauty. Beneatha's statement that the family suffers from "ghetto-itis" draws attention to the perils of life in a segregated "ghetto" neighborhood. Her reaction that Asagai's love is not enough is an expression of her desire not just for love but for a partner dedicated to her equality and freedom as well.

Before Asagai can exit, Mama reenters and Beneatha introduces her to Asagai. Honoring her promise to Beneatha, Mama refrains from asking Asagai ignorant questions and instead parrots Beneatha's earlier complaints about "American Negroes" who "know nothing about Africa 'cept Tarzan." Following her somewhat forced "recitation," Mama relaxes and extends an open invitation to Asagai for "some decent home-cooked meals." Asagai is "moved" by her hospitality.

Mama's recitation shows that she, while perhaps not as interested in her African heritage as Beneatha, is willing to make an effort in order to make her guest feel at home. Mama's hospitality is a reflection of the pride that she takes in her family and its treatment of others.

As he goes to exit, Asagai calls Beneatha by a Yoruba nickname, "Alaiyo." Mama and Beneatha ask about the meaning of the nickname, and after thinking for a moment Asagai answers that it means, "One for Whom Bread – Food – Is Not Enough." Beneatha understands the significance and thanks Asagai for the nickname. He exits.

With the nickname, Asagai acknowledges and celebrates Beneatha's aspirations and desire for something more than just the basics, whether in love or life, which she deeply appreciates. Beneatha takes pride in her African nickname and its ability to accurately represent her dedication to her dreams.

Beneatha gazes at herself in the mirror and "clutches at her hair," squinting her eyes "as if trying to imagine something." Suddenly, she grabs her coat and heads for the door, telling a confused Mama that she is going out, "To become a queen of the Nile!"

To honor her African identity, Beneatha realizes that she must allow her hair to display its natural, unassimilated form. She embraces natural hair as an alternative ideal of beauty, and sees herself as embracing her African heritage.

Ruth reenters from the bedroom and, soon after, the doorbell rings, a sudden sound that signals that the mailman has arrived with the insurance check. Ruth sends Travis downstairs to get it. Travis returns moments later and Mama opens the envelope. As she sees the check, Mama's face "sobers to a mask of unhappiness." Mama grows thoughtful and thinks of her late husband. Abruptly and "angrily," Mama again asks Ruth about her visit to the doctor. Ruth "avoids her eyes" and evades her questions, confirming Mama's suspicion that Ruth is considering an abortion.

Mama's reaction to the check shows the negative consequences of money, as the question of its use weighs heavily on Mama, as well as the fact that this money was "earned" through the death of her husband, and as such can't possibly be worth what it "cost" to get it. The issue of abortion, which Ruth considers and Mama implicitly rejects, highlights the generational differences between the women. The fact that Ruth considers an abortion, an illegal practice at the time, shows the lengths to which she would go to protect her family from further financial strain.

Walter rushes into the apartment and immediately asks to see the insurance check. He launches into a discussion of his proposal to use the money as an investment in a liquor store. Mama stops Walter and suggests that he speak to his wife privately, but he ignores her. Mama tells Walter that she will not invest any of the insurance money in the liquor store and this refusal to even consider the proposal makes Walter angry. As Mama tries to persuade Walter and Ruth to have a "civil" conversation, Walter and Ruth hurl insults at each other, with Walter shouting that Ruth was his "biggest mistake" as she exits and slams the bedroom door.

Mama's refusal to support Walter's dream frustrates and emasculates him, eroding his sense of his worth in being what he feels he should be: a husband and father, a man, who can support his family. The insurance check prompts intra-family conflict, as arguments about money quickly become larger struggles concerning personal identity, personal dreams, and family dynamics.

Mama asks Walter what's troubling him, commenting that for the past few years "something [has been] eating you up like a crazy man." She calls him out on his constant combativeness and binge drinking, imploring him to be kinder to his wife. Walter responds, "I want so many things that they are driving me kind of crazy." Mama replies by saying that Walter should value the "nice wife" and good job that he has, to which Walter answers, "Mama, a job? I open and close car doors all day long. . . . Mama, that ain't no kind of job . . . that ain't nothing at all." Walter explains that he sees a future that is "full of nothing" looming before him.

To a great extent, Walter's dreams center on the "many things" that he wants, highlighting the centrality of material wealth in his formation of a personal identity. Walter explains that his work as a white man's chauffeur is emasculating and limits his hopes for a better future. Walter's statements show how racial discrimination regarding job opportunities curbed many African Americans' dreams for social advancement, and locked them into the role, essentially, of servants.

Mama critiques Walter's overriding emphasis on the importance of money, to which he responds that money "is life." Mama disagrees, saying, "Once upon a time freedom used to be life. . . . In my time we was worried about not being lynched and getting to the North if we could and how to stay alive and still have a pinch of dignity too." Mama laments that her children have no pride in the accomplishments of her generation.

Mama attempts to discredit Walter's money-centric worldview by reminding him of the life-or-death struggles endured by earlier generations of African Americans. In Mama's mind, dignity and freedom are virtues far more precious than material wealth. Walter cannot accept Mama's views, which he finds naive.

Mama finally tells Walter that Ruth is pregnant and considering an abortion. Walter is shocked but insists that Ruth would never think of doing such a thing. Mama disagrees, saying, "When the world gets ugly enough – a woman will do anything for her family. *The part that's already living.*" Ruth reenters and confirms Mama's statement. Mama begs her son to convince his wife to keep the baby, pleading, "I'm waiting to see you stand up and look like your daddy and say we done give up one baby to poverty and that we ain't going to give up nary another one." Walter cannot bring himself to say anything and exits. Mama calls Walter "a disgrace to your father's memory."

Mama implores Walter to honor his father's memory and take pride in his own manhood by convincing Ruth to not have an abortion. However, Walter is unable to rise to the challenge, dejected as he is by Mama's refusal to support his dreams. He finds it hard to act as a man in the way his mother wants when she does not treat him as a man in the same way she treated his father. Also, Mama is asking Walter to save his unborn child from a death inflicted by "poverty," but Walter's obsession with material wealth prevents him from taking such a stand because the baby will only make that poverty worse and make his dreams even less achievable.

ACT 2, SCENE 1

That evening, Ruth is ironing and listening to the radio when Beneatha enters "grandly" from her bedroom, wearing the robes and headdress that Asagai gave her that morning. She tells Ruth, "You are looking at what a well-dressed Nigerian woman wears." Beneatha also carries an "ornate oriental fan," which is "mistakenly" more reminiscent of Asia than Africa. Ruth is dumbfounded as Beneatha proudly "parades" around the room. Beneatha goes over to the radio and turns off the "good loud blues" that Ruth was listening to, saying, "Enough of this assimilationist junk!" Beneatha puts on one of the Nigerian records that Asagai gave her and begins dancing and singing along with the African melody.

With her costume and music choice, Beneatha embraces her African heritage. Nonetheless, her mistakenly "oriental" fan signifies that Beneatha still lacks a fully developed sense or understanding of true African identity. Additionally, Beneatha celebrates her African heritage at the expense of her African-American identity, dismissing the "good loud blues"—an musical style that emerged from the African-American experience—as whitewashed "assimilationist junk."

Walter enters during Beneatha's "performance" and he is clearly drunk. Although he first watches the spectacle with "distaste," he gradually warms to the music, saying that, "them drums move me." Ruth ignores her husband's drunken antics, but Beneatha encourages Walter's behavior, fascinated and "thoroughly caught up with this side of him." Shouting cries in Yoruba, Walter leaps onto the table and completely loses himself in a fantasy in which he is "a great chief, a descendant of Chaka." The lighting "shifts subtly" to convey the intensity of Walter's vision. Suddenly, Ruth turns off the music and George Murchison arrives at the apartment, putting an end to Walter's fantasy.

Uncharacteristically, Walter embraces his African heritage, but only in a fleeting moment of fantasy. Walter's communion with his African identity centers on regaining the lost status and majesty of African leaders, which was stolen from many African-Americans through the transatlantic slave trade. Walter imagines himself as a "great chief," a fantasy that connects to his desire to fulfill a traditional male role as a powerful protector and provider for his family.

Embarrassed, Ruth orders Walter off of the table. He exits. Looking at Beneatha's African garb, George tells Beneatha to go dress properly for their date, snidely saying that they're going *to* the theater, not performing *in* it. In response, Beneatha stares at him and "ceremoniously" takes off the headdress, revealing her newly "close-cropped and unstraightened" hair. Ruth and George are both shocked by Beneatha's "nappy" hair. While Beneatha proudly declares her hair "natural," George calls it "eccentric." Beneatha accuses George of being an "assimilationist" Negro, and George replies by saying that the "heritage" of which Beneatha is so proud is "nothing but . . . some grass huts!" Infuriated, Beneatha recites a litany of African accomplishments while Ruth pushes her towards her bedroom.

George and Beneatha situate themselves on opposing sides of the argument surrounding African-American assimilation. Beneatha uses her natural hair as a visible marker of her protest against assimilation, while George uses his social status in order to reap the benefits of membership in the mainstream of society. According to Beneatha, George denies his heritage and thus sacrifices his pride. George, in contrast, from his self-pride in his own family's success, sees a focus on African heritage as being juvenile. Meanwhile, Ruth falls in the middle of this debate, possessing neither George's social standing nor Beneatha's fierce dedication to a largely foreign cultural identity.

Ruth tries to make small talk with George while Beneatha dresses. George, fairly indifferent, ignores most of Ruth's chitchat, only commenting in order to display his knowledge of culture and to boast about his visits to New York. Walter reenters and critiques George's expensive-looking "college boy" outfit. Getting a beer from the fridge, Walter moves on to another topic, asking George about his father's business ventures. Walter tries to get George interested in his investment ideas, telling him, "I got some plans that could turn this city upside down." Visibly bored, George dismisses Walter's talk, which offends Walter.

George uses his social standing to elevate himself above what he sees as the stigma of his racial identity (and acts like a stuck-up jerk in doing so). Walter both abhors George's outward signs of wealth, such as his outfit, and deeply covets them, as evidenced by his attempt to interest George in his business ideas. Walter's dreams revolve around wealth; they center on obtaining money itself and are likewise unachievable without money. George's obsessions seem similar—having achieved wealth, he sees it as justifying his own sense of superiority.

Walter then launches into a critique of George's college education, questioning whether his expensive schooling is "teaching you how to be a man?" With "distaste," George responds by telling Walter, "You're all wacked up with bitterness, man." Walter counters, saying, "I'm a volcano. . . . I am a giant – surrounded by ants!" Walter expresses his frustration that "not even my own mother" supports his dreams, but Beneatha's reentrance puts an abrupt stop to his complaints. Beneatha and George leave, and George sarcastically tells Walter, "Good night, Prometheus," as he exits.

Walter's fears about his worth as a man lead him to question George's manhood. Taking a defensive stance, Walter describes himself as a "volcano" in an attempt to fortify his male identity. George's reference to "Prometheus," a Greek demigod who stole fire from Zeus, is intended to mock Walter's grand business dreams and also to draw attention to George's own knowledge (George is putting himself in the position of being the God).

After George exits, Ruth and Walter puzzle over the meaning of "Prometheus." Ruth advises Walter to ignore it, but Walter is "in fury" over George's "insult." Ruth then tries to broach the subject of her pregnancy, but Walter dismisses her "nagging." Walter states that he spent the afternoon "talking with people who understand me," and Ruth correctly assumes that he is referring to Willy Harris. Ruth grows impatient, and Walter bitterly snaps that he is "tied up in a race of people that don't know how to do nothing but moan, pray and have babies!" Ruth "softly" appeals to Walter to "stop fighting" her, and Walter slowly begins to cool down.

With his insult to Ruth about African-American women, Walter attempts to blame his own failings and insecurities on the women who surround him. His insult packs even more punch in light of Ruth's recently discovered pregnancy. Nonetheless, Ruth "softly" tries to resolve the couple's issues, highlighting her dedication to her marriage and family.

Ruth resignedly puts away the iron and clothes and prepares to go to bed. She apologizes to Walter for "this new baby" and states that she "better go on and do what I started," meaning that she intends to go through with the abortion. Ruth tries to offer Walter hot milk or coffee to counteract the effect of "all that liquor" that Walter drank. When Walter questions why Ruth is always trying to give him something to eat, Ruth pleadingly asks him, "What else can I give you, Walter Lee Younger?" Walter's mood softens, and he begins to talk to his wife about the way that "something done come down between us." They slowly and "gently" begin to broach the problems in their marriage, and in a moment of intimacy they kiss "tenderly and hungrily."

Walter again has the chance to talk Ruth out of having an abortion, but he says nothing. Walter's unspoken approval of Ruth's decision shows that he still fails to meet Mama's expectations for a man. His silence also indicates that he leaves the burden of this monumental decision on his wife's shoulders. Nonetheless, in a rare moment of intimacy—created when Ruth makes it clear that her offers of food are not ways to avoid his dreams but the only way she can support him—the couple seems to make limited progress towards solving the problems in their marriage, although they still lack agreement on several important issues.

Suddenly, Mama enters the apartment and ends Ruth and Walter's intimate moment. At first, Mama ignores Walter and speaks only to Ruth, asking her where Travis is. Ruth tells Mama that Travis still hasn't come home yet, saying that he is "going to get it" once he returns. Finally, Mama acknowledges Walter's questions about where she went that afternoon, saying only that she had "to tend to some business." Walter angrily worries that she did "something crazy" with the insurance money. Travis enters and tries to explain his lateness, but Ruth cuts him off and tells him to go to the bedroom and prepare for "your beating." But Mama calls Travis to her and tells him that she "bought you a house" with the insurance money. Walter erupts "in fury" and Ruth pushes Travis towards the bedroom.

For Walter, the fulfillment of Mama's dream for a house spells the death of his own dream for owning a liquor store. The insurance money again functions as a wedge that drives the family members farther apart. In Walter's eyes, the new house symbolizes the continued deferment of his dream. But for Mama the money created a possibility for Travis—who, as is implied here, in the neighborhood where they now live is getting into trouble, getting punished, and suddenly she can give him a different possibility.

Ruth is thrilled with the news that Mama bought a house for the family, raising her arms and shouting, "PRAISE GOD!" Walter says nothing, and Ruth implores him to "let me be glad . . . you be glad too." She places her hand on his shoulder, but he "roughly" pulls away. Ruth asks Mama questions about the house, and she answers "tentatively," trying to convince Walter to accept her decision. Speaking to her son's turned back, Mama explains, "It's just a plain little old house – but it's made good and solid – and it will be *ours*."

Mama tries to convince Walter to accept her dream and to recognize its value, but he cannot. He needs the dream to be his own—he needs to be the one providing. Mama takes immense pride in the realization of her and Big Walter's deferred dream. She also prides herself on the fact that the family will own its home, however humble it may be. For Mama, ownership of the house symbolizes personal freedom as well.

Ruth asks Mama where the house is located, and Mama, nervously responds that it's in Clybourne Park. Ruth's jubilance "fades abruptly" and Walter finally faces his mother with bitterness and "hostility." Ruth says that there "ain't no colored people living in Clybourne Park," and Walter angrily mocks the so-called "peace and comfort" that Mama bought for the family. Mama explains her decision, telling Walter that she "just tried to find the nicest place for the least amount of money."

Mama's explains that her choice of neighborhood was financial, but, as evidenced by her reluctance to sharing this detail with Ruth and Walter, she clearly has some concerns about the situation. Mama's dilemma highlights the racial prejudices that severely limited African Americans' options for suitable, safe, and affordable housing in segregated cities.

Ruth recovers from this revelation and regains her previous radiance, shouting, "GOOD-BYE MISERY," and expressing her joy at the prospect of leaving the cramped apartment. Holding her abdomen, Ruth recognizes the possibility that the "life" she is bearing "pulses with happiness and not despair." "Collecting herself," Ruth exits to deal with Travis.

The fulfillment of Ruth's hope for an escape from the family's cramped living situation gives her the opportunity to imagine a happy future for her unborn child. Her pregnancy is no longer a burden, but instead signifies hope and expectation. This shows that her desire to get an abortion was entirely the product of the family's poverty, not a personal choice.

After a long pause, Mama carefully tries to justify her decision to buy a house to Walter. She tells him that she saw her family "falling to pieces" that morning when they talked about "killing babies and wishing each other was dead." She explains that the family needs to "push on out and do something bigger," and she asks Walter to understand her motivation. "Silent and sullen," Walter calmly tells Mama that she doesn't need his approval because, as head of the family, Mama "run[s] our lives like you want to." In an effort to hurt his mother, Walter tells Mama that she "butchered up a dream of mine." He exits and Mama "sits alone, thinking heavily."

For Mama, the earlier events of the day, with the talk of abortion, signaled a low point for her family. Mama tells Walter that the house will be a new beginning, a unifying force that can repair the family's bonds. However, Walter cannot find hope in the promise of a new home, seeing only the death of his own dream. If his family is going to end up in a comfortable home, he wants to be the one to earn that home. With his closing line, Walter uses his deferred dream as a barb, intentionally trying to hurt Mama.

ACT 2, SCENE 2

On a Friday night a few weeks later, George and Beneatha enter the apartment after a date. Packing crates, signifying the family's upcoming move, dot the room. As George and Beneatha sit on the couch, George tries to kiss her, but Beneatha pulls away, attempting to continue their conversation. "Exasperated," George tells Beneatha to cut out "the moody stuff" and "not spoil" the evening. He states that Beneatha is a "nice-looking girl" but that he doesn't date her "to hear all about your thoughts." In response, Beneatha asks George about the purpose of getting an education, to which George answers that the point is simply to "pass the course – to get the degree." Having heard enough, Beneatha tells George good night. George exits and passes Mama as she enters the apartment.

George's admission that his interest in Beneatha is only skin-deep—that he likes her looks but doesn't care about her thoughts—flies in the face of Beneatha's personal pride and sense of self. She refuses to be taken only as a "nice-looking girl," demanding recognition as an independent-minded young woman whose ideas are to be valued. George's cynical response about the purpose of schooling, that it's really just a game to get the piece of paper that helps you go out in the world and make money—runs counter to Beneatha's idealistic belief in the transformative power of education. Beneatha wants to become a doctor to be able to help people.

Mama asks Beneatha about her date, and Beneatha responds by telling her mother that, "George is a fool." Mama replies matter-of-factly by saying that Beneatha shouldn't waste her time "with no fools." Touched by her mother's response, Beneatha thanks Mama for "understanding me this time." Beneatha exits and Mama smiles.

In light of their differences, generational and otherwise, Beneatha is touched by Mama's ability to understand her point of view. She values her mother's support, especially as it bears on her identity and self-worth as a woman. This also marks a change in Mama, brought about by the harm she sees that she has done to Walter. Now, rather than insisting that she can't understand her children, Mama is trying to support them.

Ruth enters and Mama asks if Walter is home. Ruth says that he is and implicitly adds that Walter is drunk. Someone knocks on the door and Ruth and Mama share a "weary and knowing" look, aware that it is their meddling neighbor. Ruth opens the door and Mrs. Johnson enters, carrying a newspaper. Mama and Ruth politely greet Mrs. Johnson, who brazenly pats the pregnant Ruth's stomach and states that she is "just soooooo happy for y'all" in reference to the Youngers' coming move. Mama, "doubting the total sincerity" of Mrs. Johnson's comments, nonetheless maintains her politeness, offering Mrs. Johnson a slice of pie.

Despite Mrs. Johnson's meddling and overly familiar manner, Mama and Ruth keep a cool head and maintain their politeness, showing the pride that they take in their family and its reputation for hospitality. Although they clearly do not enjoy Mrs. Johnson's visits, they treat her kindly as a courtesy.

Mrs. Johnson asks Mama and Ruth if they "seen the news what's all over the colored paper this week," eagerly telling them "with the spirit of catastrophe" that an African-American family was "bombed" out of his home in a white neighborhood of Chicago. Mrs. Johnson continues melodramatically, insincerely saying that she thinks that, "It's wonderful how our folks keeps on pushing out." In her speech, Mrs. Johnson uses the term "nigger," which angers Mama, who doesn't allow the word to be used in her house.

Mama's sense of dignity and personal pride contribute to her prohibition of the term "nigger" in her household. Additionally, the story of the bombing draws attention to the very real dangers that accompany the family's move and the violent extent of Northern racism.

In a not-so-subtle way, Mrs. Johnson asks for a cup of coffee, which Ruth and Mama give her. Mrs. Johnson then asks about Walter, going on to discuss his ambition and good looks and guessing that it was his idea to move the family to Clybourne Park. Mrs. Johnson imagines next month's headlines in the colored newspaper, gleefully and dramatically suggesting, "NEGROES INVADE CYLBOURNE PARK – BOMBED!" Ruth and Mama gaze at Mrs. Johnson "in amazement," and she disingenuously adds that of course she hopes that no harm will befall the Younger family.

At this point, Mrs. Johnson has clearly overstayed her welcome and appears to derive pleasure from filling the Younger household with fear. Ruth and Mama are shocked by Mrs. Johnson's shameless comments, which run counter to the Youngers' deep sense of dignity. Mrs. Johnson's imagined headline gives voice to the Youngers' own worst fears about the outcome of their move, and also imply that Mrs. Johnson doesn't want to see the Youngers thrive or do well in a way she herself isn't. She seems to resent their desire to escape from the place where she herself lives.

Wearing a bathrobe, Beneatha enters from her bedroom and heads to the bathroom. On her way, she "crisply" says hello to Mrs. Johnson, who is insulted by Beneatha's curt manner. After Beneatha exits, Mrs. Johnson tells Mama and Ruth that Beneatha acts as if she "ain't got time to pass the time of day with nobody ain't been to college." Mrs. Johnson then mentions Walter's dissatisfaction with his work as a chauffeur, but states that he shouldn't be ashamed because there "ain't nothing wrong with being a chauffeur." Mama objects, saying that there is "plenty wrong" with it and repeating her late husband's belief that "being any kind of servant wasn't a fit thing for a man to have to be."

Mrs. Johnson criticizes the pride that Beneatha takes in her education, which Mrs. Johnson believes is excessive. Mrs. Johnson contrasts Beneatha's self-satisfaction with Walter's disappointment with his work as a chauffeur, which she conversely tries to defend as an honorable profession. In a change from her earlier stance, Mama rejects Mrs. Johnson argument, acknowledging the emasculating aspect of her son's work. Mama recognizes the racial prejudice that limits her son's job opportunities.

Mrs. Johnson bristles at Mama's speech, declaring that the Youngers are "one proud-acting bunch of colored folks." She then quotes assimilationist Booker T. Washington's dictum that, "Education has spoiled many a good plow hand." Mama responds by calling Washington a "fool." Offended, Mrs. Johnson exits. Beneatha reenters and Mama lightly scolds her behavior towards Mrs. Johnson, to which Beneatha responds, "If there are two things we, as a people, have got to overcome, one is the Ku Klux Klan – and the other is Mrs. Johnson." Beneatha exits.

Mama takes a stance against Mrs. Johnson's defeatist brand of assimilation, standing up for her children and their dreams for a better future. Mrs. Johnson views the Youngers' pride as a negative quality, one that mistakenly allows them to see themselves as exceptional. Beneatha's statement that equates Mrs. Johnson and the KKK show the extent to which she believes assimilationist ideology is a scourge on the African-American community.

The telephone rings and Ruth answers it. Mrs. Arnold, the wife of Walter's employer, is on the line and tells Ruth that Walter hasn't been to work in three days. She warns Ruth that Mr. Arnold will find a new chauffeur if Walter doesn't come in tomorrow. Ruth, unaware of her husband's absences, nonetheless covers for Walter, telling Mrs. Arnold that Walter has been very ill. Ruth hangs up and asks Walter, now standing in the bedroom's doorway, about his behavior. Walter tells Mama and Ruth that he spent the three days by himself, driving around in Willy Harris' car and walking around Chicago. He says that he went to a bar called the Green Hat, where he listened to the "best little combo in the world." Ruth exits and Mama continues to listen to Walter's dejected and drunken ramblings.

Walter's irresponsible behavior displays the extremely detrimental effect that the deferral of his dream has had on him. Walter has lost all hope and motivation, completely abandoning his duties as a husband and father. Additionally, at this point Ruth is unable or unwilling to combat her husband's irresponsibility with the family's financial security, leaving the room after she hears enough of his drunken ramblings.

Overcome with guilt, Mama realizes that she has unknowingly contributed to Walter's descent into depression by refusing to support his dream for a liquor store. She admits that, "I been doing to you what the rest of the world been doing to you," but explains to Walter that she "ain't never really wanted nothing that wasn't for you." She takes an envelope from her handbag and places it in front of Walter. She explains that she has already paid $3,500 as a down payment on the house. She gives control over the remaining $6,500 of the insurance payment to Walter. She tells him to put $3,000 in a savings account for Beneatha's schooling but gives him complete control over how to spend the rest of the money. Mama makes Walter "head of this family from now on like you supposed to be." Mama exits.

As was evident during her conversation with Mrs. Johnson, Mama realizes that her denial of Walter's dream has only added to the many limitations that already curb Walter's opportunities for advancement. In the hopes of restoring part of his identity and self-esteem, Mama gives Walter control of the money, which gives him control over his future. Mama turns over the money and leadership of the family, allowing Walter to finally assume the role of an adult in the household, which is what he needs to be able to see himself as "man".

Deeply moved by his mother's gesture, Walter is filled with a sense of "mingled joy and desperation." Travis enters for bed and Walter "sweetly" begins to talk him. Walter asks his son "what kind of man" he wants to be when he grows up. Travis answers that he wants to be a bus driver, but Walter says that Travis' dream "ain't big enough." Walter tells Travis that "after tonight" he will be able to provide financially for the family. He says that he plans to make a "business transaction" that will change their lives. Walter continues to talk, dreaming of the "elegant" car and home that he will buy for his family. He tells Travis that on his seventeenth birthday, Travis will be able to pick whichever college he wants to attend "and you'll *go*." Walter proudly proclaims that he will "hand" Travis "the world!"

The possibility of achieving his dream reinvigorates Walter and permits him to regain his identity as a worthy husband and father. While Walter dreams of providing for his family, his dreams nonetheless revolve around markers of material wealth, such as cars and homes. Walter dreams of being able to offer his son "the world," an aspiration that centers on the power of money to overcome racial prejudice and limitations. It's also worth noting that he dreams of sending his son to college, though he mocks Beneatha's ambitions to get an education. It's not education he doesn't believe in—it's education for women.

ACT 2, SCENE 3

A week later, it is Saturday, moving day for the Youngers. Before the curtain rises, Ruth's joyful singing "cuts through the silence" as she finishes the family's packing. Beneatha enters and Ruth happily shows her some curtains that she bought for the new house. Ruth is exuberant and light-hearted and she tells Beneatha how Walter has "done changed so 'round here." Beaming, Ruth tells Beneatha that she and her husband went on a date to the movies last night and even held hands.

With the opportunity to fulfill his dream, Walter has become a new man, rededicating himself to his duties as a husband and father. With the confidence boost that accompanied his appointment as head of the household, Walter feels more self-assured and makes progress towards improving his relationship with Ruth.

Walter enters, carrying a large package. Like Ruth, he is happy and exuberant. He places the package in a corner and puts on a record. He and Ruth begin to dance "a classic, body-melding 'slow drag,'" which prompts Beneatha to call them "old-fashioned [Negroes]." Continuing to dance, Walter playfully tells his sister, "Damn, even the N double A C P takes a holiday sometimes!" Beneatha and Ruth laugh. The doorbell rings and Beneatha answers it while Ruth and Walter continue their "clowning." Beneatha is "surprised" to find a white man in a business suit at the door.

Walter lampoons his sister's hardline views on race in a playful manner, in contrast to the siblings' frequent arguments earlier in the play. The characters display a light-heartedness that was largely unknown in the earlier parts of the play, highlighting the redemptive power of dreams, when those dreams no longer seem entirely out of reach.

The man tells Beneatha that he is looking for Lena Younger. She briefly excuses herself, closes the door, and "soundlessly" explains to the oblivious Ruth and Walter that a white man is at the door. They stop dancing, turn off the music, and Beneatha reopens the door to invite the man inside. Beneatha tells the man that her mother isn't home and Walter, "freely" and proudly, tells the man that he looks after his mother's "business matters." The man then introduces himself as Karl Lindner, a representative of the Clybourne Park Improvement Association. Walter is comfortable and at ease as he urges Lindner to have a seat and offers him a drink. Shuffling his hat and briefcase, Lindner is visibly uneasy.

Walter takes obvious pride in his new position as head of the household, as evidenced by his proud assertion that he handles Mama's finances. From the Younger's actions it is clear that the arrival of Lindner, a white man, at their door is a very unusual circumstance, highlighting the deeply segregated nature of Chicago's neighborhoods.

As Lindner sits and begins to explain the purpose of the Clybourne Park Improvement Association, Beneatha grows suspicious of Lindner's explanation that the association exists to solve "special community problems." The double meanings of Lindner's statements escape Ruth and Walter, and Walter urges his sister to be quiet and allow Lindner to speak.

Beneatha quickly interprets the double meaning in "special community problems," understanding that the Youngers' move may be seen as a "community problem" by the (white) people of Clybourne Park. With racial issues at the forefront of her mind, Beneatha is extremely skeptical of and sensitive to Lindner and his mission in a way Walter and Ruth are not at first.

Seeing that Lindner still looks uncomfortable, Ruth offers Lindner another chair to sit in, but "more frustrated than annoyed," he declines. With a "great breath," he launches into a speech about the "incidents" that have happened "when colored people have moved into certain areas." Lindner states that the Clybourne Park Improvement Association is a "unique type of organization" because "not only do we deplore that kind of thing – but we are trying to do something about it." This seemingly open-minded statement piques Beneatha's interest and she begins to listen with "genuine interest."

Extending the family's hospitality, Ruth offers Lindner the chance to make himself more comfortable. He declines, perhaps embarrassed by the family's dignity and politeness. When Lindner appears to show some support of racial tolerance, Beneatha momentarily reconsiders her assumptions about Lindner.

Lindner continues his speech, "gaining confidence in his mission" when he sees the interest in his listeners' faces. Lindner explains that the "hard-working, honest" people of Clybourne Park have "a dream of the kind of community they want to raise their children in." He adds that, "right or wrong," a man "has the right to want to have the neighborhood he lives in a certain kind of way." Coming to his conclusion, Lindner says that the "overwhelming majority" of Clybourne Park believes, "rightly or wrongly," that "for the happiness of all concerned that our Negro families are happier when they live in their *own* communities." He tries to convince his listeners that "race prejudice simply doesn't enter into" the association's beliefs.

Lindner tarnishes the family's dream of moving to Clybourne Park by supporting the "dream" of the people of Clybourne Park to live in a segregated community. In vain, Lindner attempts to distance himself from the message that he delivers to the Youngers, telling them that he cannot judge if Clybourne Park's dream is "right or wrong." Despite Lindner's assertion, it is clearly apparent that some sort of race prejudice does *factor into Clybourne Park's decision, otherwise why would he be there at all?*

With this evidence of Lindner's true motive in visiting the family, Beneatha bitterly denounces the so-called "Welcoming Committee." Walter is "dumbfounded." Lindner adds that the association is willing "to buy the house from you at a financial gain to your family." Walter and Ruth are both appalled, and Walter tells Lindner to leave the apartment. Seeing the "hostile faces" of the Youngers, Lindner questions what the family hopes to gain "by moving into a neighborhood where you just aren't wanted." Before he exits, Lindner places his card on the table, in case the family changes its decision.

The family collectively maintains its pride by resoundingly rejecting Lindner's degrading offer. Fortified by dignity, they refuse to sell their pride in exchange for money. The family refuses to succumb to racial prejudice, although Lindner's closing words hang ominously in the air after he exits.

Mama and Travis enter the apartment. "Smiling," Beneatha says that Mama had a "caller," and Beneatha, Walter, and Ruth "saucily" and playfully relate the story of Lindner's visit. Visibly concerned by this news, Mama tends to her plant and asks whether Lindner threatened the family. Beneatha explains that Lindner's efforts were much more subtle than that, summarizing his remarks as, "Everybody ought to learn how to sit down and hate each other with good Christian fellowship."

Mama carefully tends to her plant, showing her concern for the survival of the family's dream following Lindner's visit. While the rest of the family makes light of Lindner's visit, Mama worries about the physical dangers that may await the family in Clybourne Park. Beneatha's joke highlights the utter hypocrisy of Lindner's efforts.

Beneatha "laughingly" notices that Mama is carefully tending to her plant during this conversation. She asks Mama what she is doing, and Mama replies that she is fixing her plant so that it will survive the upcoming move. Beneatha is shocked that Mama plans to take "that raggedy-looking old thing" to the new house, to which Mama wittily snaps back, "It expresses ME!"

This conversation recalls an earlier exchange between Beneatha and Mama regarding Beneatha's hobbies. For Mama, the plant represents the family's perseverance and dedication to its deferred dreams. She takes great pride in its dogged survival, which symbolizes her own strength, her efforts to express herself through the survival and thriving of her family.

Walter comes over to Mama and bends down, squeezing her in a tight embrace. Mama is "overwhelmed" but "delighted" by this unexpected show of affection, "gruffly" but very happily telling Walter to leave her alone while she tends to her plant. Walter "sweetly" and "playfully" begins to sing, and Ruth brings Mama the package that Walter carried in earlier. They tell Mama to open the package, which she does slowly, carefully lifting out "one by one" a "brand-new" set of gardening tools. Mama is deeply touched by the gift from Walter, Ruth, and Beneatha, which is the first gift that she has received in her life "without its being Christmas." Mama is delighted that she won't have to use "knives and forks" as gardening tools anymore.

Mama is deeply touched by the gift of gardening tools, which she hopes to use to make a small garden at the family's new house. The tools represent just how close Mama is to finally realizing her long deferred dream. Mama finally has the proper tools with which to tend to her garden and houseplant, and she will use them with pride to help her garden thrive. Similarly, Mama hopes that the new house will provide the right setting in which the Youngers' themselves can grow and prosper.

Travis eagerly asks his father if he can give Mama his gift, and Walter agrees. "Racing back" with a large hatbox, Travis proudly presents Mama with a "very elaborate, wide gardening hat." The adults are overcome with laughter at the sight of the hat. Out of concern for Travis' feelings, Mama defends the gift, telling her grandson that it is "the prettiest hat I ever owned." When Mama puts on the hat, Walter tells her that she looks like she is "ready to go out and chop you some cotton."

Travis takes pride in his gift for Mama, although he misses the implications of the large, elaborate gardening hat. Walter's comment on the hat points to the racial stereotypes that the hat encompasses.

The doorbell rings and Beneatha heads to her room to continue packing. Mama and Travis go to exit. Walter sings to himself and throws open the door to reveal Bobo, a "very slight" man with "haunted frightened eyes." Walter asks Bobo where Willy Harris is, and Bobo responds that he isn't with him. Walter remains jubilant and is unfazed by this news, but Ruth is already "a mood apart," standing "stiffly" in the background and somehow sensing "death."

Seeing the "haunted" look in Bobo's eyes, Ruth perceptively senses that his arrival heralds the "death" of the family's dreams. Walter, singularly focused on the near fulfillment of his own dream, misses the signs.

In a bumbling and tentative manner, Bobo begins to explain to Walter that he has "a real bad feeling" about the investment that they made with Willy Harris. Bobo tells Walter that Harris never showed up yesterday morning to make the planned trip to Springfield to obtain a liquor license. In tears, Bobo explains to an increasingly angry Walter that Harris disappeared without a trace. In shock, Walter anxiously tries to imagine different scenarios that would explain Harris' absence. Walter desperately looks to his horrified wife and grabs Bobo by the collar and shakes him.

At first, Walter refuses to fully accept Bobo's news, clinging to the hope that Willy Harris has a reasonable excuse for his absence at the train station. Ruth gradually realizes the extent of the loss, and Walter begins to process Bobo's story. For Walter, the loss of the money represents more than just the loss of the money—it represents his failure to live up to the responsibility and role he'd been craving. Rather than support his family, he has financially ruined it.

Fully recognizing the implications of Willy's disappearance, Walter breaks down, "crying out for Willy and looking for him or perhaps for help from God." Walter falls to the floor and sobs, pounding the ground with his fists. Mama and Beneatha enter from the bedroom. Walter screams, "THAT MONEY IS MADE OUT OF MY FATHER'S FLESH." Bobo watches him helplessly and then exits.

Humiliated and desperate, Walter begins to spiral out of control. The insurance money represented Big Walter's ultimate sacrifice for the family. Walter senses that he destroyed his father's dream for the family's future with the blind pursuit of his own misguided ambition.

Mama goes to Walter and asks him if all of the insurance money is in fact gone. Walter admits that he never went to the bank and never placed the money for Beneatha's schooling into a savings account. Mama stands quietly in disbelief, looking at her son "without recognition." Suddenly, she begins to beat him "senselessly." Beneatha intervenes and pulls her mother away from Walter. Mama tells her children how she watched Big Walter "killing himself" to provide for his family, telling Walter that he just "gave it all away in a day." Mama looks up and asks God for "strength."

Mama laments that Walter squandered his father's sacrifice, which Big Walter earned for the family by practically working himself to death. She is legitimately angered by the fact that Walter selfishly used all the money to fund his own ill-advised dream without saving any money for Beneatha's dream. And, in her anger, she touches on how Walter has failed to live up to his father's example, has failed to be a man.

ACT 3

An hour later, Walter's loss of the insurance money fills the apartment with "a sullen light of gloom." Asagai enters the apartment to visit Beneatha, who is deeply upset about the lost money. Beneatha explains the situation to Asagai and he asks her how she is doing. Beneatha responds, "Me? . . . Me, I'm nothing." She then recounts the story behind her initial desire to become a doctor, telling Asagai of a childhood friend who was severely injured in a sledding accident. Beneatha tells Asagai that she was amazed that "one person could . . . sew up the problem, make him all right again," although she states that she has now lost her youthful idealism.

With the loss of the money to fund her dream, Beneatha appears to have lost her pride in her identity, which was intimately tied to her dream of becoming a doctor. Without her dream to anchor her identity, Beneatha is unmoored and disparages her youthful hope and idealism.

Asagai tries to convince Beneatha of the value of idealism, but she rejects his arguments. She mocks Asagai's dream for African independence, asking him about what comes after freedom: "What about all the crooks . . . who will come into power and steal and plunder the same as before – only now they will be black and do it in the name of the new Independence." When Asagai responds, "That will be a problem for another time," Beneatha refuses his answer and rejects his idealistic belief in human progress.

Having lost her own dream, Beneatha attacks Asagai's idealistic dream for African independence. With her cynical statement on African freedom, Beneatha anticipates the problems that many newly formed African nations did face. Instead of celebrating her African heritage, Beneatha now focuses on the problems that will plague a free Africa.

Beneatha laments that with the loss of the insurance money her dream for the future has been stolen "right out of my hands." Asagai asks Beneatha whether the money was hers, inquiring more specifically whether she earned it or would have received it if Big Walter hadn't died. When Beneatha says no, Asagai states that there is "something wrong in a house – in a world – where all dreams, good or bad, must depend on the death of a man."

Asagai raises the important distinction between money that is earned and money that is simply inherited. He criticizes Beneatha's overemphasis on money that she did not earn and scolds her for hitching her dream, however noble, to the death of her father.

When Beneatha accuses Asagai of being unable to provide an argument in favor of idealism, Asagai shouts, *"I LIVE THE ANSWER!"* He tells Beneatha that violence and revolution may well be the price of independence. He presents Beneatha with a hypothetical situation in which he holds political office in an independent Nigeria, explaining that murder at the hands of "my own black countrymen" would constitute "an advance" over murder by white colonial forces.

By using himself as an example, Asagai explains to Beneatha that progress occurs in starts and stops, encouraging her to hold on to her dream despite this recent setback. He explains that a free Nigeria – even if it still contains violence, even if it kills him – will constitute progress towards a better future.

"Rather quietly," Asagai suggests that Beneatha "come home" with him. At first, Beneatha mistakenly believes that Asagai is merely asking her to come to his apartment and, exasperated, she dismisses his ill-timed suggestion. Asagai quickly clarifies his meaning, adding, "I mean across the ocean: home – to Africa." Beneatha is amazed by Asagai's offer, which is tantamount to a marriage proposal. Asagai says, "In time, we will pretend that – you have only been away [from Africa] for a day." He embraces Beneatha and passionately kisses her. Suddenly, she pulls away, overwhelmed by the events of the day. Beneatha tells Asagai that she needs time to consider his proposal. He exits, leaving her with her thoughts.

Beneatha is touched but overwhelmed by Asagai's unexpected proposal. Although she takes great interest in her African roots, her initial confusion over Asagai's meaning of "home" may signal that she does not go so far as to imagine Africa as her home. Additionally, the implied marriage proposal complicates Beneatha's dreams, which prioritize her ambition to become a doctor over marriage.

Walter enters from the bedroom and "feverishly" begins to look for something. Filled with disgust for her brother, Beneatha launches into a "monologue of insult," mockingly calling Walter an entrepreneur. Walter ignores her comments and finally finds a small white card. He puts the card in his pocket and rushes out the door.

Beneatha uses her brother's irresponsibility with money as a weapon with which to further diminish his self-esteem. She lampoons Walter's aspirations of material wealth and power.

Ruth enters, followed shortly by Mama. Mama seems "lost." She picks up her plant from the table and returns it to its former spot by the window. She asks Ruth or Beneatha to call the moving company and cancel their move. Mama remembers how people "down home" in the South used to call her a "high-minded thing" and tell her that she "aimed too high all the time." Ruth tries to convince Mama to go ahead with the move, desperately telling Mama that she will "strap my baby to my back . . . and scrub all the floors in America" if that's what it takes to keep the new house. Mama "absently" refuses, saying, "No – I sees things differently now."

Returning the plant in its usual place by the window, Mama signals that she has given in to the dissolution of her dream and resigned herself to the fact that the family will remain in the apartment. With the loss of the money, Mama loses both her dream and her sense of pride, stating that she simply "aimed too high." Mama references the people who found her too "high-minded," recalling Mrs. Johnson assimilationist perspective. Ruth offers to make tremendous sacrifices to make the family's dream a reality.

Walter reenters and tells Mama, Ruth, and Beneatha that he made a phone call to "The Man." Beneatha realizes that Walter is referring to Karl Lindner and questions Walter about the call. Walter states that the family is "going to do business with him." Walter begins a speech about the divisions in life between "the takers and the 'tooken.'" Walter says that the Youngers, part of the "tooken," are "all mixed up" because of their preoccupation with "the right and the wrong." He sarcastically thanks Willy Harris for teaching him how "to keep my eye on what counts in this world," by which he means money.

Walter's speech recalls his earlier assertion that money is "life." He emphasizes the overriding importance of money, which he believes carries more weight than moral distinctions between right and wrong. He resents his status as part of the "tooken" and is willing to sacrifice his pride in order to become a "taker." Walter covets the control and power that "takers" exert over the world.

Still in denial of Walter's intentions in calling Lindner, Ruth again asks Walter about the phone call. Walter says that he told Lindner to come back to the apartment, telling Ruth that he plans to "put on a show" for the white man. The women grasp Walter's purpose for calling Lindner, and Mama tells her son that he is "making something inside me cry." Mama implores Walter to reconsider and uphold the family's pride, saying, "I come from five generations of people who was slaves and sharecroppers – but ain't nobody in my family never let nobody pay 'em no money that was a way of telling us we wasn't fit to walk the earth."

Mama mourns her son's decision to sacrifice his and the family's pride for financial gain. She laments his decision to accept Lindner's humiliating, prejudiced offer, which also signals Walter's implicit acceptance of racial stereotypes. Mama invokes the generations of slaves and sharecroppers who, despite their dire financial straits, at least maintained their pride in the face of crippling racial discrimination.

Walter protests, shouting, "I didn't make this world! It was give to me this way!" He asserts that he is a "man" and, as such, he wants the ability to financially support his family. He gives his family a preview of the "show" that he plans to put on for Lindner, dropping to his knees and "groveling" in an "anguished imitation" of a "slow-witted movie stereotype." He says that he will tell Lindner to "just gi' ussen de money . . . [and] we's ain't gwine come out deh and dirty up yo' white folks neighborhood." His family looking on in horror, Walter then "breaks down" and goes to his bedroom.

Walter's pained imitation of an African-American stereotype marks his complete loss of dignity and shows the lengths to which he will go in order to obtain Lindner's money. Walter declares his manhood but nonetheless behaves childishly and cowardly. He resents that as an African American man in mid-century Chicago he is unable to fulfill the mainstream male role as a financial provider for his family.

Beneatha sneers that Walter is "not a man . . . but a toothless rat." Mama asks Beneatha if she is "mourning" her brother's loss of pride, to which Beneatha answers that Walter is "no brother" of hers. Mama scolds Beneatha's lack of compassion, telling Beneatha that she should love Walter the most when he is "at his lowest and can't believe in hisself 'cause the world done whipped him so!" Mama tells Beneatha to mourn her brother, not the insurance money that he lost.

Mama criticizes Beneatha for her lack of empathy and for placing concerns about her own dream before concerns about Walter's debilitating loss of pride. She urges Beneatha to release her anger and love her brother, hoping that the family's love can repair the damage that the world – and racial prejudice – has done to Walter.

Travis runs into the room and says that the moving men have arrived. A moment later, Lindner appears at the door. Ruth "mechanically" goes to the bedroom and tells Walter that Lindner has arrived. After a long pause, Walter enters the living room. Lindner efficiently arranges the contract on the table while Walter moves "slowly and awkwardly . . . like a small boy." Ruth tells Travis to go downstairs, but Mama orders Travis to stay put so that Walter can "make him understand what you doing. . . . You show him where our five generations dome come to."

Walter's boyish demeanor when greeting Lindner represents the loss of manhood that has been brought about by Walter's decision to sacrifice his pride. Mama's demand that Travis witness Walter's decision to accept Lindner's bribe is a last-ditch attempt to appeal to Walter's sense of dignity. In the presence of his son, the next generation, Mama hopes that Walter will honor the sacrifices of earlier generations and show that same pride even in terrible circumstances.

Walter begins his conversation with Lindner meekly, telling him that the Youngers "are very plain people." Looking down at his feet, Walter tells Lindner that his father, Big Walter, was a laborer. Lindner, "absolutely confused" by the point of Walter's comments, focuses on the contract. Suddenly, Walter stares at Lindner and assumes a "sudden intensity." He tells Lindner that his father once "almost *beat a man to death*" for calling him "a bad name." Lindner is utterly confused. Gaining confidence, Walter continues, stating firmly, "What I mean is that we come from people who had a lot of *pride*." He adds that his sister Beneatha plans to become a doctor.

And though Walter begins slowly and meekly, as he tells Lindner about the accomplishments of his family, he gradually gains confidence, evidenced by his ability to look Lindner in the eye. Remembering the pride that Big Walter took in his racial identity, Walter begins to revise his decision to accept Lindner's offer. Walter even celebrates Beneatha's dream to become a doctor, a marked change from his earlier criticism of his sister's ambition.

Calling Travis to him, Walter stands proudly behind his son and tells Lindner that Travis "makes the sixth generation of our family in this country." Walter reaches the climax of his speech, telling Lindner, "We have decided to move into our house because my father – my father – he earned it for us brick by brick." Walter adds that the family doesn't want "to make no trouble . . . or fight no causes," and he rejects Lindner's money. In vain, Lindner appeals to Mama to ask Walter to reconsider. As the family stares at Walter Lee in awe, Lindner exits, saying, "I sure hope you people know what you're getting into."

In a hugely transformative moment, Walter reaffirms his and the family's pride and, further, by referencing the six generations of his family to live in America he asserts that he is as American (and, likely, more American) than Lindner himself. He also identifies the house as the fulfillment of his father's dream, and moving to the house is thus something earned (recall Asagai's comment to Beneatha earlier in Act 3) and not something inherited. Walter's comment that the family won't "fight no causes" distances the family from more radical factions of the civil rights movement. Walter is saying that the family will be good neighbors to the white people of Clybourne Park, but he is also asserting their right to be neighbors of those white people.

"Coming to life," Mama and Ruth fly into action, making the final preparations for the family's move to Clybourne Park. They "deliberately" try to ignore "the nobility" of Walter's decision, focusing instead on the task at hand. Beneatha excitedly tells Mama that Asagai proposed to her that afternoon, but in the busyness of the moment Mama brushes off the conversation. Walter picks up the conversation and tells Beneatha that she should marry "a man with some loot." Beneatha and Walter exit while arguing with each other.

Interestingly, the family's reserved dignity prevents it from taking excessive pride in Walter's decision. They wordlessly and internally celebrate his moral victory without shamelessly celebrating the moment. Walter's insistence that Beneatha marry someone with money signals that the family still has its disagreements and also shows Walter's continued preoccupation with money. Not everything has been fixed. Not everything is perfect. But they still have their pride, and they still have each other.

Making final preparations to leave the apartment, Mama references Walter's confrontation with Lindner, asking Ruth, "He finally come into his manhood today, didn't he?" Biting her lip to contain her own pride in Walter, Ruth agrees that he did. Ruth exits, leaving Mama alone in the apartment. Mama looks around at the family's home and, overcome with emotion, stifles a cry. She exits the apartment only to reenter a moment later, retrieving her plant and leaving for the final time.

Ruth and Mama take great pride in Walter's moral victory over racial prejudice, recognizing that his decision marks his transformation into a man. Mama's decision to take the plant to Clybourne Park symbolizes a new beginning for the family's dreams, but also hints at continued struggles for the family at its new home.

HOW TO CITE

To cite this LitChart:

MLA

Jumper, Alexandra. "*A Raisin in the Sun.*" *LitCharts*. LitCharts LLC, 17 Oct 2013. Web. 27 Jun 2017.

CHICAGO MANUAL

Jumper, Alexandra. "*A Raisin in the Sun.*" LitCharts LLC, October 17, 2013. Retrieved June 27, 2017. http://www.litcharts.com/lit/a-raisin-in-the-sun.

To cite any of the quotes from *A Raisin in the Sun* covered in the Quotes section of this LitChart:

MLA

Hansberry, Lorraine. A Raisin in the Sun. Vintage. 2004.

CHICAGO MANUAL

Hansberry, Lorraine. A Raisin in the Sun. New York: Vintage. 2004.