

Preparing for the Film

1. How do you envision the lives of an African American family living in the inner city of Chicago during 1959? What might be some typical problems they may encounter? What might be their hopes and dreams?
2. When people have been betrayed by someone they trusted and have had their "dreams deferred" or destroyed, what may be possible results?
3. When families have several generations living under the same roof, what are some conflicts and possible benefits that may occur?
4. If you have read Lorraine Hansberry's play *A Raisin in the Sun*, what are some challenges that a director might encounter when adapting it for a film version for viewers today?
5. The play and movie both begin with the text of Langston Hughes' poem "Harlem." How does each of the similes--"a raisin in the sun," "a sore," "rotten meat," "syrupy sweet," and "heavy load"-- represent a distinctly different response to having a "dream deferred"? What might be some ways that people "explode" in inner cities like Harlem or the south side of Chicago when their dreams are deferred or destroyed?

Reflecting on the Film

1. As the movie opens with Morgan Freeman's voice-over of Langston Hughes' poem, describe the images of the pre-dawn inner city and of the Younger family.
2. Unlike the play, the movie has added some initial scenes of Lena/Mama (played by Phylicia Rashad). We immediately see Lena leaving her home before dawn, and shortly thereafter interacting with Priscilla, and at the store buying apples. How do each of these scenes help us learn of her character before we see her interacting with her family?
3. Where does the film add humor to the early scenes to lighten the tone despite the early signs of tension between Walter Lee (played by Sean Combs) and Ruth (played by Audra McDonald)?
4. How does the film create an aura of anticipation about the \$10,000 check from Big Walter's insurance and what is ironic about such expectations?
5. Explain specific references to dreams and any obstacles to their dreams as revealed by these characters: Lena, Big Walter (as told by Lena), Walter Lee, Beneatha (or "Benny," as she is often called). and Asagai.
6. How do Beneatha's two suitors--George Murchison and Joseph Asagai--represent distinctly different values, goals, and attitudes toward women?
7. What does Beneatha claim about God? How and why does Mama respond as she does?
8. Describe how Walter finds out about Ruth's pregnancy and how he, Beneatha, and Mama each react to the news. How does the film dramatize Ruth's dilemma about her pregnancy as well as her ultimate decision.
9. How does Mama explain to Walter Lee her decision to spend a third of the \$10,000 insurance money on a down payment for a house? How do Walter Lee and Ruth each react to her decision?

10. What prompts Mama to give the remaining \$6500 to Walter Lee and what is he to do with it? How does Mama's trust in him change his attitude?
11. When the family visits their new home in Clybourne Park, what gifts do they give Mama and what does the camera show about the house, neighbors, and neighborhood.
12. How does Mr. Lindner try to present his offer and how does the family initially respond to it?
13. Explain what happens to Walter's investment deal and how he and each family member reacts to the loss.
14. Why does Walter Lee call Mr. Lindner back to the house and what is he planning to tell him? What does Mama say to Beneatha to help her and the audience realize what Walter Lee is going through?
15. What does Mama say to Travis in front of all of them, including Mr. Lindner, that prompts Walter to change his plan completely? Explain what he says and why it shows he has "come into his manhood today."
16. What does Mama's little plant represent throughout the film and what is significant about Walter retrieving it and handing it gently to Mama in the final scene. What is suggested by having the camera pan out the back door, up the stairs, to the blue skies as the film ends?

Writing about the Film

1. Focusing on deferred dreams, write an essay comparing and contrasting the dreams of Walter, Lena, Beneatha, and Ruth--and their reactions when their dreams are threatened. Include specific scenes and quotations from the film to illustrate your claims.
2. Write an essay analyzing how Mama's values and beliefs are questioned and challenged by both of her children. Describe Mama's dramatic confrontations with both Walter and Beneatha and decide which of Mama's values are ultimately upheld by the end of the play.
3. Write a character analysis of Lena or of Walter Lee, focusing on a strong thesis based on character traits that you can illustrate about either character. Include specific quotations from the film to support your claims.
4. If you have read Hansberry's play, write an essay analyzing the challenges for any writer and director adapting this play for the screen for a modern audience and evaluate the changes made in this production. Include direct quotations from the play and the film to support your claims.

Works Cited

Hansberry, Lorraine. *A Raisin in the Sun*. New York: Signet, 1958. Rpt. 1966. Print.

A Raisin in the Sun. Screenplay by Paris Qualles. Dir. Kenny Leon. Perf. Sean Combs, Audra McDonald, Phylicia Rashad, Sanaa Lathan, Justin Martin, Bill Nunn, David Oyelowo, Ron C. Jones, Sean Patrick Thomas, and John Stamos. Bad Boy Films, Storyline Entertainment, SONY Pictures Television, 2008. DVD.

Select Film Reviews and Critical Analyses of the 2008 Film Version

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<http://online.wsj.com/news/articles/SB120363708783684237>

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