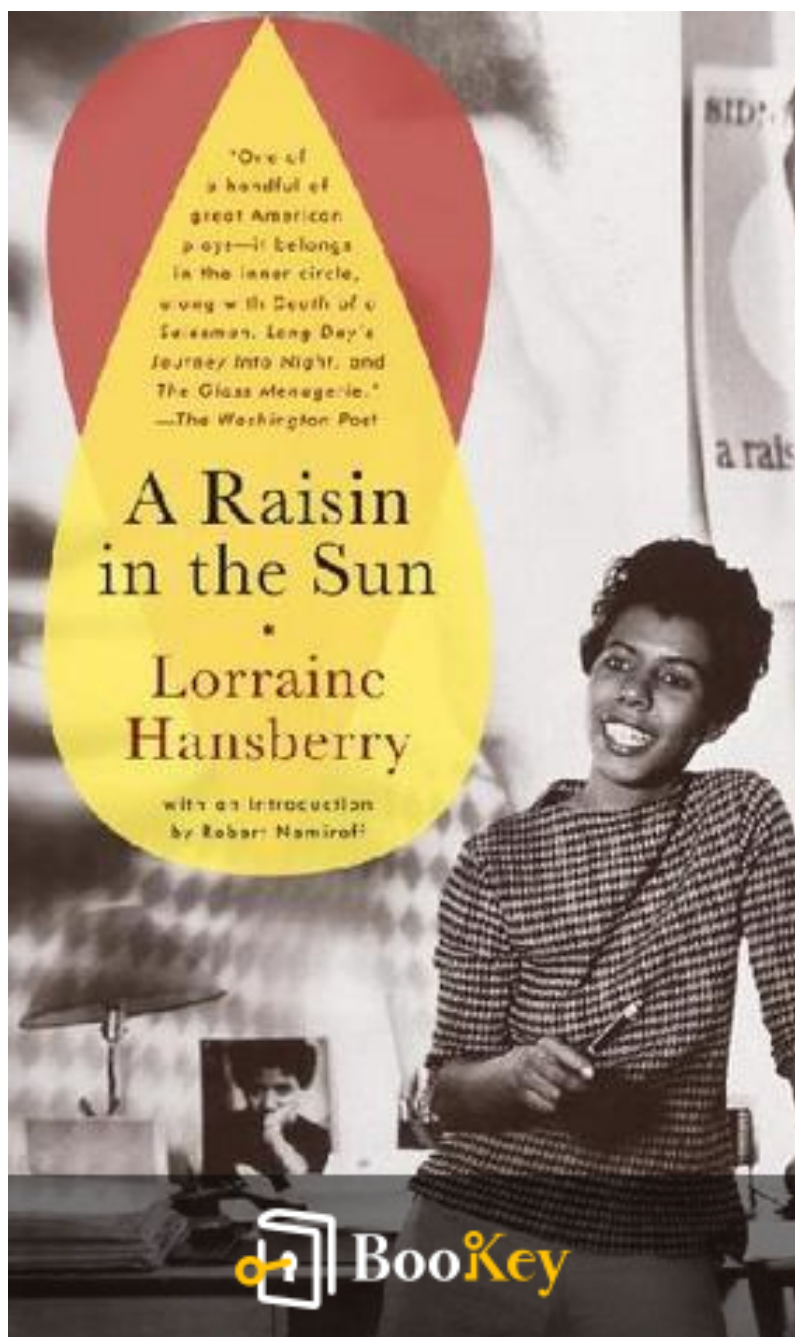


A Raisin In The Sun PDF (Limited Copy)

Lorraine Hansberry



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A Raisin In The Sun Summary

Exploring Dreams and Struggles in African American Life

Written by New York Central Park Page Turners Books Club

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About the book

A Raisin in the Sun, Lorraine Hansberry's groundbreaking drama that premiered on Broadway in 1959, represents a significant moment in American theater. It authentically captures the struggles and dreams of a working-class Black family living on Chicago's South Side. Celebrated by literary figures like James Baldwin, the play resonates deeply with the African American experience, showcasing the profound aspirations and challenges faced by its characters. The title, inspired by Langston Hughes's poem "Harlem," poses the haunting question of what happens to dreams that go unfulfilled. Now recognized as a classic, this Modern Library edition features the fully restored, uncut text along with an introduction by Robert Nemiroff, ensuring that Hansberry's powerful message remains as relevant today as it was when first unveiled.

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About the author

Lorraine Vivian Hansberry was a trailblazing American playwright, best known for her groundbreaking work, *A Raisin in the Sun* (1959). This play powerfully depicts the struggles faced by Black families in a racially segregated Chicago. As the first Black woman to have a play produced on Broadway, Hansberry's work resonated deeply with themes of identity and aspiration, themes that were famously echoed in Nina Simone's song "To Be Young, Gifted and Black." The title of her celebrated play comes from Langston Hughes' poem "Harlem," which poses the poignant question about the fate of deferred dreams. Hansberry's own family confronted the harsh realities of segregation, culminating in the landmark Supreme Court case *Hansberry v. Lee*. After moving to New York, she contributed to the pan-Africanist newspaper *Freedom*, where she engaged with prominent thinkers and focused on issues of liberation. In addition to her insights on race, she identified as a lesbian, and her writings often delved into themes of sexual freedom. Tragically, she passed away from cancer at just 34 years old, leaving behind a remarkable legacy.

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Chapter 1 Summary: Friday morning.

Summary of "A Raisin in the Sun" - Chapter 1

In the opening scene of *A Raisin in the Sun*, we are introduced to the cramped living room of the Younger family, which bears the marks of wear from years of use. Once a source of pride, the space now highlights their struggles, encompassing an array of dreams and disappointments. Set in Chicago's South Side, sometime between World War II and the present, the scene evokes a sense of stagnation in the family's life.

Morning Routine and Family Dynamics

As dawn breaks, we meet Ruth, Walter Lee, and their son Travis. Ruth rises early to prepare breakfast and urge her son to get ready for school. Her interactions with Walter are marked by a tense yet familiar banter; he is restless and consumed by thoughts of a liquor store investment he is contemplating with his friend Willy. Walter criticizes Ruth for not supporting his ambitions, revealing the strain in their marriage. Meanwhile, Ruth, weary and overburdened, tries to navigate their daily life while coping with Walter's frustrations.



Conflicts Over Aspirations

Tensions arise as Walter's dreams clash with Ruth's practical perspective, especially during conversations about money for Travis and Walter's ambitions. Travis, eager yet frustrated over not having money for school, adds to the mounting pressure within the family. Just then, Beneatha, Walter's sister, joins the scene with her own aspiration of becoming a doctor, intensifying the disputes regarding the insurance money left behind by their late father. Walter views the funds as vital for his liquor store dream, while Beneatha insists that they should be used for her education.

Generational Tensions

Beneatha's independence and assertiveness sharply contrast with the more traditional maternal figures like Ruth and Mama, the family matriarch. When Mama enters, she brings warmth alongside her hopes for the insurance money, dreaming of a house with a garden where Travis can play. However, Ruth meets her plans with skepticism, revealing deeper generational divides around ambition, financial matters, and family roles.

Climactic Confrontations

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A heated argument erupts between Walter and Beneatha over their individual aspirations and the legacy of their deceased father. Walter accuses Beneatha of being ungrateful and selfish for not contributing to the family's financial needs, highlighting the pressure they each feel in their pursuit of their dreams within their limited circumstances. Mama tries to mediate the conflict but often finds that her values clash with the aspirations and ideas of the younger generation.

Themes of Dreams and Identity

In this opening act, key themes emerge, such as deferred dreams, the struggles of African American families, and reflections on cultural identity. The Younger family represents the African American quest for identity and success amid socioeconomic challenges, as seen through their interactions and conflicts over aspirations.

As the curtain falls on this scene, it establishes a foundation for deeper explorations of aspiration, family bonds, and the ongoing challenges of discovering one's place in a world that often feels oppressive and confining.

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Chapter 2 Summary: The following morning.

Chapter 2 Summary of "A Raisin in the Sun"

In this scene, the Younger family is busy with their morning house cleaning. Mama is scrubbing the kitchen walls while Beneatha, dressed in dungarees and armed with an insecticide spray, assists her. Young Travis is eager to head outside, but he is reminded of his chores. The phone rings, and when Beneatha picks it up, tension brews between her and her brother Walter, who is preoccupied with his business plans.

Ruth enters the room looking upset, and after some probing, it is revealed that she is pregnant. Mama voices her hope for a girl, while Beneatha, being more pragmatic, questions Ruth about the planning behind the pregnancy. The atmosphere shifts when Beneatha invites her friend Joseph Asagai over, sparking Mama's concerns about bringing someone into their untidy home.

When Asagai arrives, he brings gifts from Nigeria for Beneatha, which delights her as she explores her cultural identity. Their conversation reveals Beneatha's internal conflict regarding her identity and societal expectations. Asagai playfully teases her about her hair, prompting her to reflect on issues of cultural assimilation and self-acceptance.



The mood changes dramatically when the family receives a check for ten thousand dollars, a sum that brings both excitement and dread. Mama fears the implications of this money, while Walter grows increasingly frustrated with her cautious approach to investing in a liquor store. He urges her to see the potential for a brighter future. Their arguments expose deep familial tensions, particularly concerning gender roles and personal aspirations.

The scene becomes heavier with worry when Mama reveals that Ruth is considering having an abortion, introducing a sense of trauma into their interactions. Initially, Walter is in disbelief, but he soon grasps the seriousness of the situation. Mama implores Walter to uphold their family's values and legacy as they confront Ruth's decision.

This chapter underscores important themes such as identity, the clash between dreams and reality, family dynamics, and the struggles faced by African Americans. The characters are vividly depicted, showcasing their hopes, frustrations, and the cultural and personal pressures they endure. The scene concludes on a tense note, highlighting the challenging choice between hope and despair in the face of adversity, leading the family into deeper conflict.



Chapter 3 Summary: Later, the same day.

Summary of Act II, Scene 1 of "A Raisin in the Sun"

In this vibrant scene, Ruth is busy ironing while Beneatha emerges from her room, adorned in a striking Nigerian outfit gifted to her by Asagai. She dismisses American music in favor of her African roots and begins a dance that symbolizes a traditional welcome. Just then, an intoxicated Walter bursts in and joins her in a dramatic display, reflecting their shared ancestral pride, while also revealing his frustration with his current life and unfulfilled aspirations.

The atmosphere changes when George Murchison arrives to take Beneatha to the theater, creating tension among the family members. Walter mocks George's fashion choices, leading to a heated argument centered on identity, heritage, and societal expectations. Frustrated by George's assimilationist viewpoints, Beneatha passionately defends her pride in her African heritage, resulting in a clash of ideals.

Amidst the comedic elements, Walter's bitterness about his unachieved dreams and financial struggles becomes evident. He lashes out at Ruth, implying that he feels isolated and unsupported in his ambitions. This emotional disconnect unveils the strain in their relationship, emphasizing



themes of pride, identity, and the challenges of family communication.

Mama enters, announcing that she has purchased a house with the insurance money. This news excites Ruth but angers Walter when he learns that the house is in the all-white neighborhood of Clybourne Park. Mama's decision, intended to be beneficial, raises questions about race relations and the harsh realities the family must confront in their search for a better life.

The scene concludes with Mama attempting to reason with Walter, expressing her desire to see the family progress rather than regress. This moment highlights the tension between her ideals and Walter's dreams. Walter's sullen response encapsulates the deep divisions and conflicting aspirations within the family, leaving a lingering uncertainty about their future.

Overall, this scene encapsulates the intense emotions, cultural pride, and interpersonal challenges faced by the Younger family, intertwining humor with poignant reflections on identity, dreams, and familial connections.

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Chapter 4: Friday night, a few weeks later.

Summary of Chapter 4 of "A Raisin in the Sun"

In this chapter, the Younger family is busy packing as they prepare to move to their new home. Beneatha and George return from a night out, but their conversation quickly becomes tense. Beneatha is frustrated with George's superficial nature and his lack of depth; she values meaningful discussions about life and ambitions, while George prefers to enjoy their time together free from heavy topics.

As Beneatha voices her dissatisfaction with George, Mama enters, shifting the scene to a mixture of worry and hope regarding their upcoming move. The bond between Mama and Beneatha is warm, showcasing a deep understanding between mother and daughter. Beneatha expresses gratitude for Mama's support, hinting at their close relationship despite their differing views.

Ruth joins them, and soon they are visited by their overly enthusiastic neighbor, Mrs. Johnson, who brings a mix of unwelcome news and idle chatter. Mrs. Johnson discusses her thoughts on life and race, highlighting the struggles faced by Black communities in Chicago during this era. Mama grows weary of Mrs. Johnson's insensitivity and ignorance regarding their



family's aspirations.

Walter, the man of the household, has been absent from work, spending his days wandering and reflecting on life while neglecting his responsibilities. This leads to a serious conversation with Ruth about his job loss and search for purpose. Their evening culminates in a touching moment where Mama entrusts Walter with money for the family's future, emphasizing her belief in his potential to take charge and provide for them.

Walter shares his dreams with his son, Travis, envisioning a future filled with success and opportunities for him. The chapter concludes on an uplifting note, as Walter promises a brighter life, full of ambition and hope, lifting Travis in a moment of joy and aspiration.

Key Events:

- The struggles in Beneatha and George's relationship highlight their differing views on ambition and self-worth.
- Mrs. Johnson's arrival creates tension while also underscoring the broader community challenges faced by Black families.
- Walter's battle with his identity and future comes to a climax when Mama gives him financial responsibility, symbolizing her trust in his capabilities.
- A powerful father-son moment between Walter and Travis encapsulates themes of hope, dreams, and generational aspirations.



Character Developments:

- Beneatha emerges as a strong-willed, independent young woman seeking deeper connections.

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Chapter 5 Summary: Moving day, one week later.

Summary of Chapter 5 of "A Raisin in the Sun"

Moving Day Excitement

The chapter begins on a vibrant Saturday morning—it's moving day for the Younger family. Ruth is bustling around, enthusiastically packing and preparing for the big day, all while dreaming about indulging in a luxurious bath in their new home. Her sister-in-law, Beneatha, enters the scene, and the two share some lighthearted banter. Soon after, Walter joins them, exuding happiness and playfulness, even dancing with Ruth. This fleeting moment of joy and hope hints at the possibilities that a new home can bring.

Unexpected Visitor

Their celebration is interrupted by the arrival of Karl Lindner, a white man representing the Clybourne Park Improvement Association. He comes under the pretense of offering a warm welcome, but his true intentions quickly reveal a more unsettling aspect of community dynamics. Lindner proposes to buy back the house from the Youngers, which creates tension in the room. He insists that their presence could stir conflict in the predominantly white neighborhood, masquerading his racial implications as concern for



community harmony.

Clashing Perspectives

Walter and Beneatha engage in a tense discussion about Lindner's patronizing tone and underlying racism. Walter feels angered by the proposition, perceiving it as a direct threat to their hard-earned dream of home ownership—an embodiment of his aspirations as a man and provider. Their exchange illustrates contrasting views on race, identity, and community, with Beneatha's sarcastic remarks cutting through Lindner's condescending demeanor. Walter's frustration reaches a peak as he forcefully dismisses Lindner, marking a significant moment of defiance.

Family Bonds Tested

Once Lindner leaves, Ruth and Beneatha tease their mother about the visitor's intentions, showcasing a blend of fear, humor, and resilience. Mama enters shortly after, unaware of the recent tension, and amiably prepares for the move, carrying a cherished plant that represents her dreams and memories. The mood shifts dramatically when Walter reveals the family's financial struggles and the weight of their sacrifices.

The Shocking Revelation

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The scene takes a dramatic turn with Bobo's arrival, bringing troubling news that their business partner, Willy, has disappeared along with their investment funds. This shocking revelation hits Walter hard, shattering his sense of hope and making him realize that their dreams have crumbled. His anguish over the loss of not just money but also his family's financial future and legacy adds significant emotional depth to the story. Mama's despair culminates in an emotional confrontation with Walter, exposing her own pain and the sacrifices made by their father, intensifying the family's battle against systemic challenges.

Themes and Character Development

This chapter highlights themes of racial tension, family unity, the conflict between dreams and reality, and economic instability. The characters undergo notable transformations—from moments of joy and anticipation to feelings of despair and confrontation—showcasing their resilience in the face of adversity. Walter's journey shifts from hopeful ambition to profound disappointment, while Mama's maternal strength is tested as she confronts the implications of dreams deferred. The family's bond remains central to the narrative, underscoring their struggle for identity and belonging against a backdrop of societal prejudice.

In essence, this chapter encapsulates the complexity of the Younger family's aspirations and the harsh realities posed by racial and economic obstacles,



leaving a lasting emotional impact as they confront their uncertain future.

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Chapter 6 Summary: An hour later.

Summary of Chapter 6 from "A Raisin in the Sun"

In this emotionally intense scene, the Younger family grapples with the consequences of Walter's choices and dreams. The living room is steeped in a gloomy atmosphere, reminiscent of the play's opening. Walter sits alone, consumed by his thoughts, while Beneatha is surrounded by packing crates, vocalizing her profound disappointment and disillusionment.

Asagai comes to visit Beneatha, attempting to lift her spirits by discussing progress and life in Africa. However, she reveals the heartbreaking news that Walter invested the family's insurance money poorly, leaving it depleted. This disclosure sparks a deep conversation about aspirations, self-worth, and the challenges they face in society. Beneatha mourns her dream of becoming a doctor, reflecting on how her idealism has waned in light of harsh realities.

Asagai challenges Beneatha's negativity, encouraging her to look beyond their current hardships and view life as a continuous journey of transformation. He suggests that she consider returning to Africa with him, igniting a mix of hope and confusion within her.

Walter then enters with an urgency that suggests desperation. He is frantic,



searching for something, a symbol of his inner turmoil. Beneatha cruelly mocks him, but the tension rises as she lashes out at his behavior and aspirations.

Ruth and Mama join the conversation, each bringing their frustrations and reflections. Mama proposes that perhaps they should reconsider moving into the new house, expressing a deep sense of defeat. This dialogue underscores the generational conflict within the family, where Mama's dreams clash with Walter's modern ambitions and Beneatha's more radical views.

Walter's ambitious desires reach a boiling point when he confronts Lindner, the neighborhood representative who offers to buy them out to prevent their relocation. Initially, Walter contemplates accepting this offer as a means to financial security. However, he ultimately rejects it in a pivotal moment, choosing to uphold the family's dignity and refusing to be paid to stay away from their new home because of their race. This decision marks a significant turning point for Walter, as he embraces his identity and responsibilities as a man and father.

The chapter wraps up with a flurry of packing and moving preparations, symbolizing a fresh start despite their struggles. Beneatha shares her ambitions with Mama, but their conversation is interrupted by the chaos of the moving process. As the family comes together amid the chaos, they face uncertainty collectively while holding on to their dreams, representing



resilience and hope in the face of adversity.

Key Themes and Developments:

- **Identity and Pride:** Walter's rejection of the buyout offer emphasizes his quest for dignity in a racially divided society.
- **Disillusionment vs. Hope:** The characters wrestle with their dreams and harsh realities, showcasing generational conflicts around ambition and identity.
- **Family Dynamics:** The play delves into how family relationships can change, especially in the aftermath of disappointment and societal pressure.
- **Cultural Heritage:** Beneatha's discussions with Asagai highlight the significance of African identity and the complexities of cultural assimilation.

The unfolding drama vividly illustrates a family's resilience against systemic challenges, underscoring the importance of hope, identity, and the struggle for a brighter future.

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