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***A Raisin in the Sun* (1959) – Selected Passages**

**The debatable issue for this argument-centered project is:**

**On balance, *A Raisin in the Sun* expresses a more optimistic than pessimistic view of the world.**

Page numbers in the following selected passages refer to the 1995 Vintage Books edition of *A Raisin in the Sun* by Lorraine Hansberry.

**(1) “*RUTH*** *is about thirty. We can see that she was a pretty girl, even exceptionally so, but now it is apparent that life has been little that she expected, and disappointment has already begun to hang in her face”* (Act I, Scene 1, 24).

**(2) “WALTER** That’s it. There you are. Man say to his woman: I got me a dream. His woman say: Eat your eggs. (*Sadly, but gaining in power.)* Man say: I got to take hold of this here world, baby! And a woman will say: Eat your eggs and go to work” (Act I, Scene 1, 33).

**(3) “RUTH** 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 any more. He needs this chance, Lena” (Act I, Scene 1, 42).

**(4) “MAMA** Big Walter used to say, he’d get right wet in the eyes sometimes, lean his head back with the water standing in his eyes and say, "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” (Act I, Scene 1, 45-46).

**(5) “ASAGAI** Between a man and a woman there need be only one kind of feeling. I have that for you . . . Now even . . .right this moment . . .

**BENETHA** I know – and by itself – it won’t do. I can find that anywhere.

**ASAGAI** For a woman it should be enough” (Act I, Scene 2, 62-63).

**(6) “WALTER** Sometimes it’s like I can see the future stretched out in front of me – just plain as day. The future, Mama. Hanging over there at the end of my days. Just waiting for me – a big, looming blank space – full of *nothing*. Just waiting for *me*” (Act I, Scene 2, 73).

**(7) “GEORGE** 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 Benin – and then some poetry in the Bantu – and the whole monologue will end with the word *heritage! (Nastily)* Let’s face it, baby, your heritage is nothing but a bunch of raggedy-assed spirituals and some grass huts!” (Act II, Scene 1, 81).

**(8) “WALTER** Bitter? Man, I’m a volcano. Bitter? Here I am a giant – surrounded by ants!” (Act II, Scene 1, 85).

**(9) “MAMA** Walter Lee – it makes a difference in a man when he can walk on floors that belong to *him* . . .” (Act II, Scene 1, 92).

**(10) “RUTH** (*Looking off)* Is there – is there a whole lot of sunlight?

**MAMA** (*Understanding*) Yes, child, there’s a whole lot of sunlight” (Act II, Scene 1, 94).

**(11) “BENEATHA** 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” (Act II, Scene 2, 104).

**(12) “MAMA** It ain’t much, but it’s all I got in the world and I’m putting it in your hands. I’m telling you to be the head of this family from now on like you supposed to be” (Act II, Scene 2, 107).

**(13) “WALTER**  Just tell me where you want to go to school and you’ll *go*. Just tell me, what it is you want to be – and you’ll *be* it….Whatever you want to be – Yessir! (*He holds his arms open for* TRAVIS) You just name it, son…(TRAVIS leaps into them) and I hand you the world!” (Act II, Scene 2, 109).

**(14) “RUTH** Lord, that man – done changes so ‘round here. . . . We went – and we held hands” (Act II, Scene 3, 111).

**(15) “WALTER** Oh, God . . . Don’t let it be true . . . (*He is wandering around, crying out for WILLY and looking for him or perhaps for help from God).* Man . . . I trusted you . . . Man, I put my life in your hands . . .. Man . . . (*He starts to pound the floor with his fists, sobbing wildly*.) THAT MONEY IS MADE OUT OF MY FATHER’S FLESH –” (Act II, Scene 3, 128).

**(16) “BENEATHA** I wanted to cure. It used to be so important to me. I wanted to cure. It used to matter. I used to care. I mean about people and how their bodies hurt . . .

**ASAGAI** And you’ve stopped caring?

**BENEATHA** Yes – I think so.

**ASAGAI** Why?

**BENEATHA** (*Bitterly*) Because it doesn’t seem deep enough, close enough to what ails mankind! It was a child’s way of seeing things – or an idealist’s . . . .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?!” (Act III, 133-134).

**(17) “WALTER** “I tell you I am a *man*—and I think my wife should wear some pearls in this world! (*This last line hangs a good while and WALTER begins to move about the room. The wod ‘Man’ has penetrated his consciousness; he mumbles it to himself repeatedly between strange agitated pauses as he moves about)*”(Act III, 143).

**(18) “MAMA** There is *always* something left to love . . . 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? . . . That ain’t the time at all. It’s when he’s at his lowest and can’t believe in hisself ‘case the world done whipped him so!” (Act III, 145).

**(19) “WALTER** What I am telling you is that we called you over here to tell you that we are very proud and that this (*signaling to Travis*) this is my son, and he makes the sixth generation our family in this country. And we have thought about your offer—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’ve got to say about that. We don’t want your money” (Act III, 148).

**(20) “MAMA** (*Quietly, woman to woman*) He finally come into his manhood today, didn’t he? Kind of like a rainbow after the rain” (Act III, 151).