

A RAISIN IN THE SUN



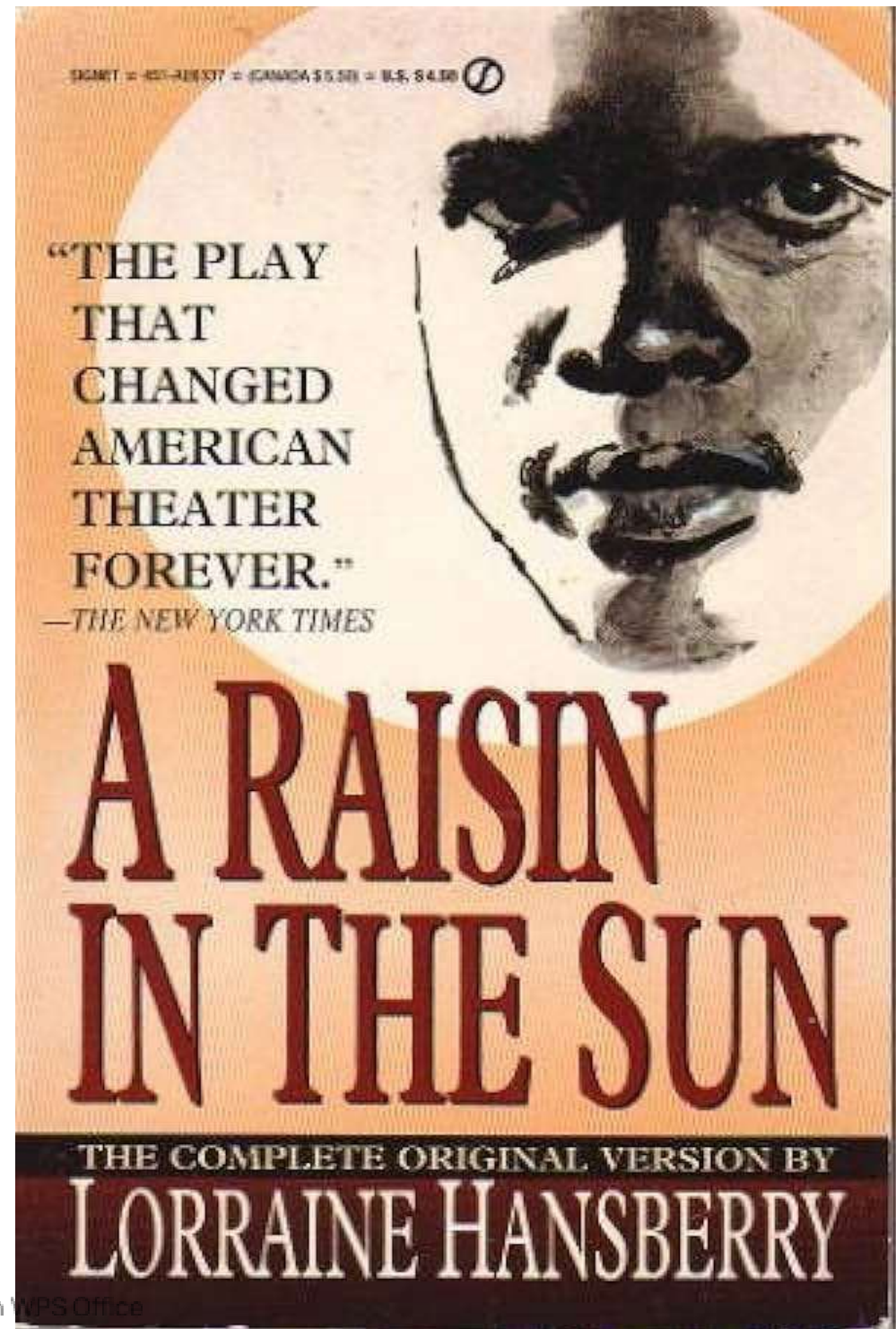
The Author- Lorraine Hansberry

- Lorraine Hansberry was born on May 19, 1930 in Chicago, Illinois. She was a playwright, author and activist.
- She grew up in southside Chicago as the youngest of four children.
- She moved to Newyork to pursue her career as a writer.
- She was the first black woman to have Broadway show produced.
- She died at the young age of 34 due to pancreatic cancer.



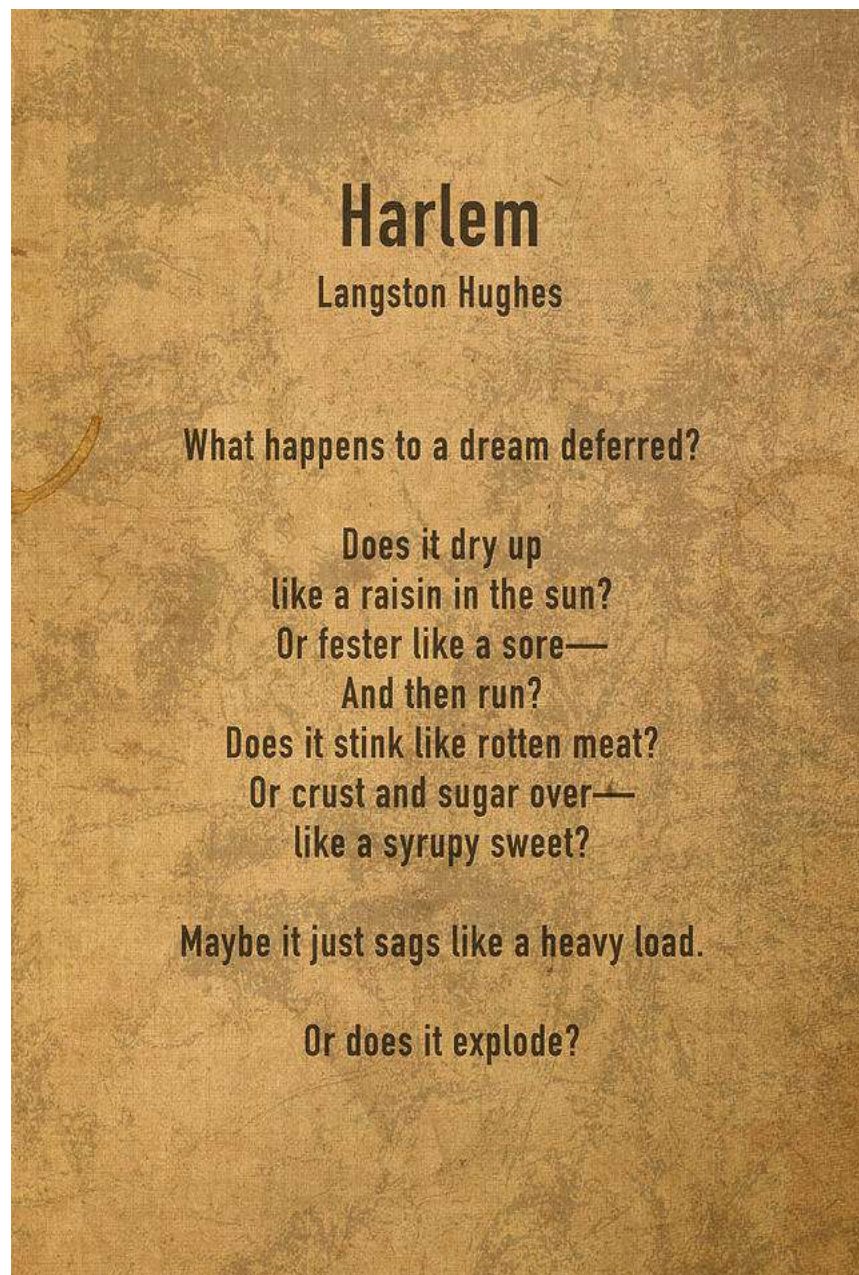
A Raisin in the Sun

- Opened at the Barrymore Theatre in New York on 11 March, 1959
- Regarded as a turning point in American art because it deals with many important issues during the 1950s in the United States.
- Bagged the New York Drama Critics Circle Award for the Best Play of the year
- James Baldwin wrote of the play, "Never before, in the history of American theatre, had so much of the truth of black people's lives been seen on stage."
- The film version of the play was an outstanding success as well.



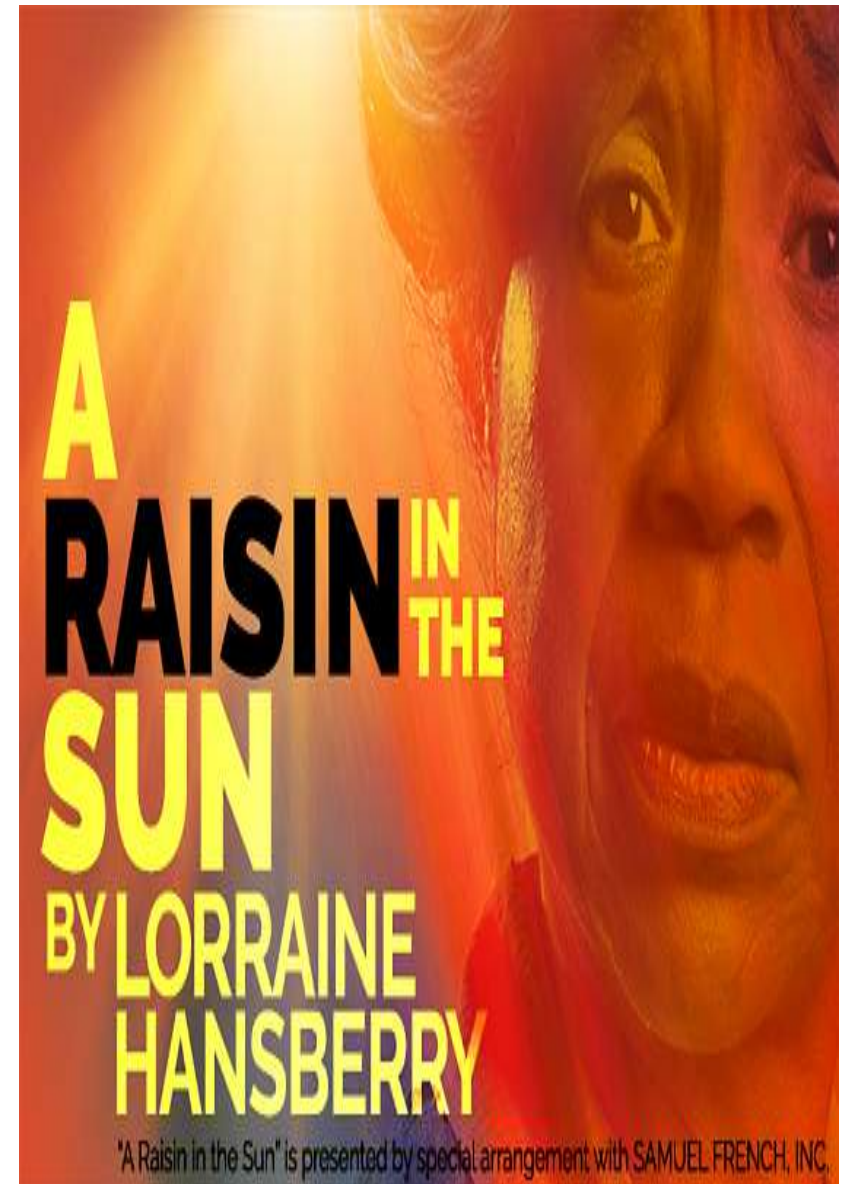
HARLEM: THE INSPIRATION

The Play's title is taken from "Harlem", a poem by Langston Hughes, which raises the question "What happens to the dreams deferred? Does it dry up like A Raisin in the Sun?"



The play is semi-autobiographical

Hansberry drew inspiration from her personal experience. The events of the play, which show efforts of a black family to improve their lives by buying a spacious home in a racially restricted neighborhood, are based on true events of her life. Lorraine Hansberry's drew inspiration from her own experiences of racial harassment after her prosperous family moved into white neighborhood.



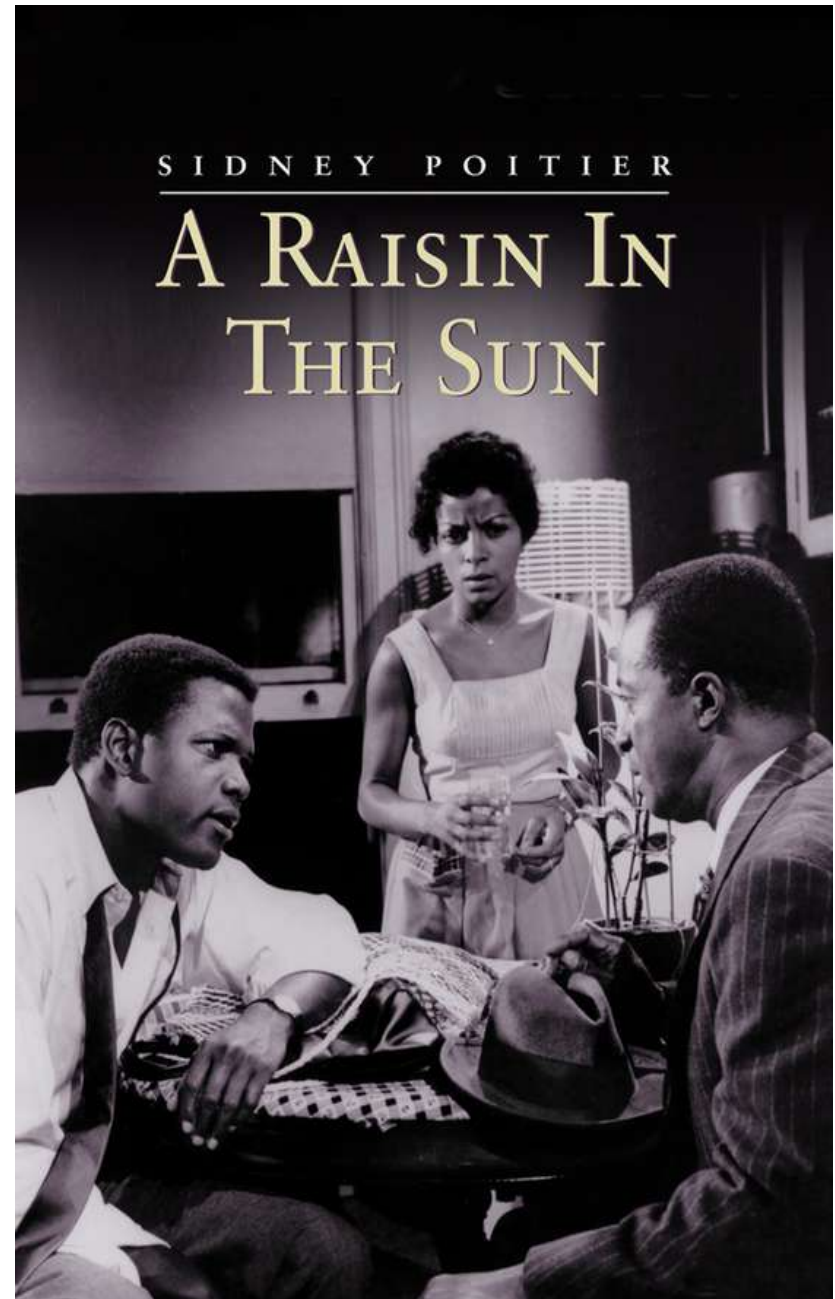
Setting

- South side Chicago, sometime between the end of World war II and 1959
- The age of growth of suburbs and commercialization but underneath the economic prosperity there was racial tension and discrimination.
- South side was racially segregated and black people were restricted to slum area known as “Black belt” of the Southside.
- Landlords took advantage by chopping up apartment buildings and cramming more people into each building.
- African-Americans were “last to be hired, first to be fired” after World War II resulting in instable incomes and more poverty.



Overview of the Play

- The play tells about the experience of a black family in south chicago, as they try to improve their financial condition with the help of an insurance pay out after the death of the father and also deals with housing discrimination, racism and assimilation.
- The play is essentially about dreams. Each member of the house has a separate dream.
- As the play progresses, the members of the Younger family clash over their competing dreams as the limited resources cannot support the dreams of all the family members.
- At the end of the play, the Youngers move out of the apartment, fulfilling the family's long-held dream. Their future seems uncertain but they are optimistic and determined to live a better life. They believe they can succeed if they stick together as a family and resolve to defer their dreams no longer.



Themes

•Dreams, Hopes and Plans

Each member of the house has a dream and is struggling against the very limited financial resources of the family to achieve the dreams. By the end of the play, they realised that the most important dream is to own a spacious house in order to unite the family.

•Racial Discrimination

The Younger family is victim of racial discrimination. They try to oppose the racist policies by buying a house in all white neighborhood. They retaliate to discrimination with determination, courage and strength. They reassert their dignity by moving in a new house in all white neighborhood.

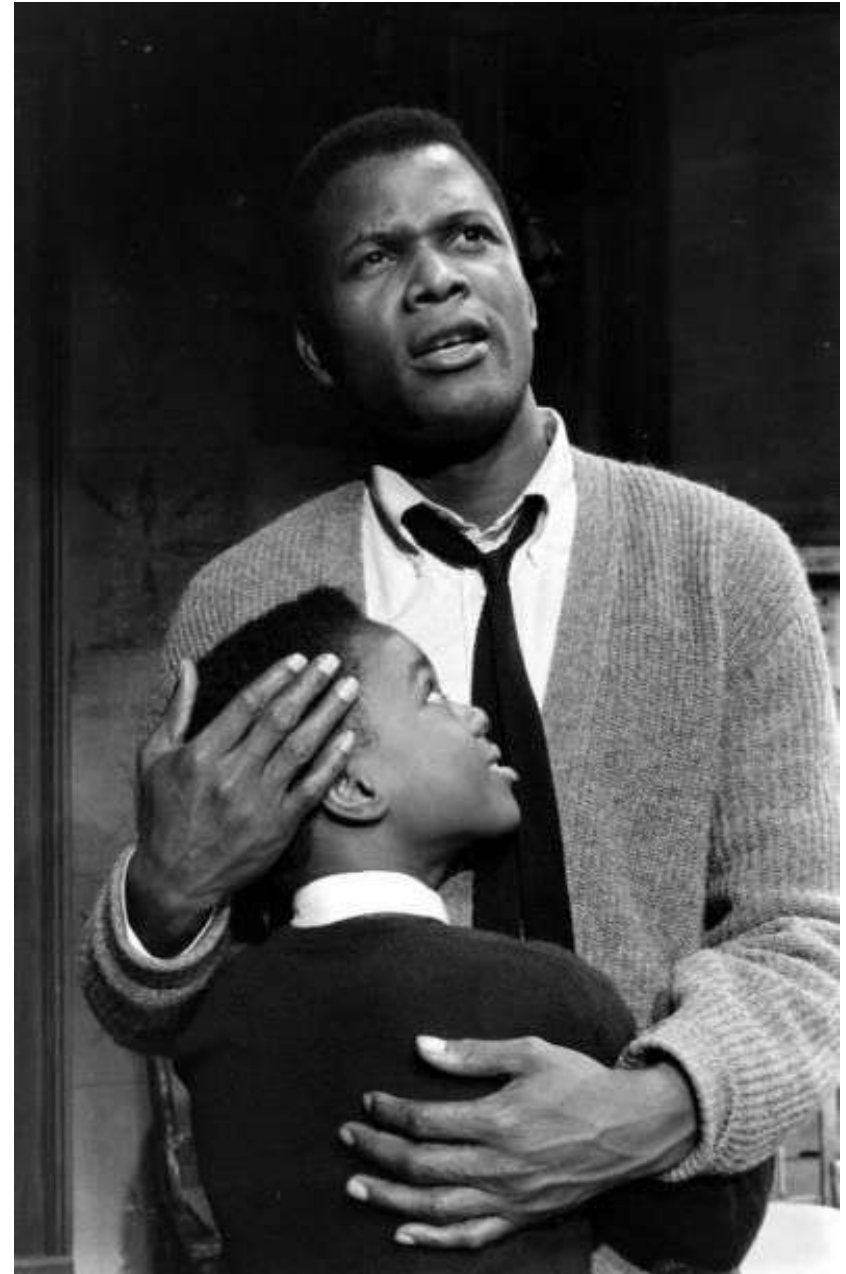
•Assimilation

The theme of assimilation is prominent in the characters of George Murchison and Mr. Linder. George Murchison best represents assimilation in A Raisin in the Sun. He is a rich, young black man who dresses and talks like white people.



Walter

- Walter represents the struggle of common African-American to provide financially for his family with limited opportunities.
- He is very ambitious and wants to earn a lot of money. He is cab-driver who feels himself as a slave. His dream is to open a liquor store.
- Walter is very immature. He invests money in liquor business in partnership with Willy, who deceives him and runs off taking away all the money. This shatters all his hopes .
- By the end of the play, he realises that he can raise his family from poverty by uniting with his family. He starts taking decisions like the head of the family, keeping in mind well-being of the family. Thus he affirms his manhood and identity.



Mama

- Walter and Beneatha's mother and head of the Younger family.
- She is religious, moral and the most nurturing character in the play. Her nurturing personality is seen in the way she takes care of her house plant. It signifies mama's care for her family. It also represents her family's deferred dreams for a better future.
- She fails to connect with her children. She is worried about Walter's desperation to earn money and Beneatha's lack of faith in God.
- Her dream is to own a spacious house with a garden. She wants to use her husband's insurance money to pay down payment for a house with backyard
- At the end of the play, her faith is redeemed when Walter refuses to accept the offer from Mr. Linder and decides to move to a new house.



Beneatha

- Beneatha is a young college student. She is rational, educated and more intellectual than the rest of the family. She is progressive and radical in outlook. She challenges both racial and gender stereotypes and prejudices.
- She dates two different men: Joseph Asagai and George Murchison. In the beginning of the play, she has straightened hair. But after meeting Asagai, she gets influenced from him. Asagai encourages her to rediscover her African heritage. He criticises Beneatha for assimilating American Culture. Then, she gets Afro hair style which expresses her African identity.
- She doesn't believe in God. She is an atheist.
- She dreams of being a doctor and struggles through out the play to affirm her identity as a well-educated and independent black woman. At the end, She decides to go to Africa with Asagai and serve her race.



Ruth

- Ruth is Walter's wife and Travis's mother. She takes care of the small apartment of the younger family.
- She is wise and very hardworking woman. She knows her duties as a daughter-in-law. Despite her pregnancy, she does all the household work and does the dishes outside in white homes to deal with the financial difficulties of the family.
- Like mama, Ruth wants to own a spacious house and have separate room to raise her children.
- Her pregnancy illustrates the financial stress of the family as she considers an abortion.
- Ruth supports her husband but is up to countering him when he gets out of line. Ruth and Walter are not happy in their marriage due to their poor financial conditions. The dispute in their marriage worsens, when Walter loses all the money he has invested in liquor business and decides to accept the offer of Mr. Linder. This shatters all her hopes. Their marriage and love revives when Walter decides to move to a new house.



Symbols used in the Play

Beneatha's Hair

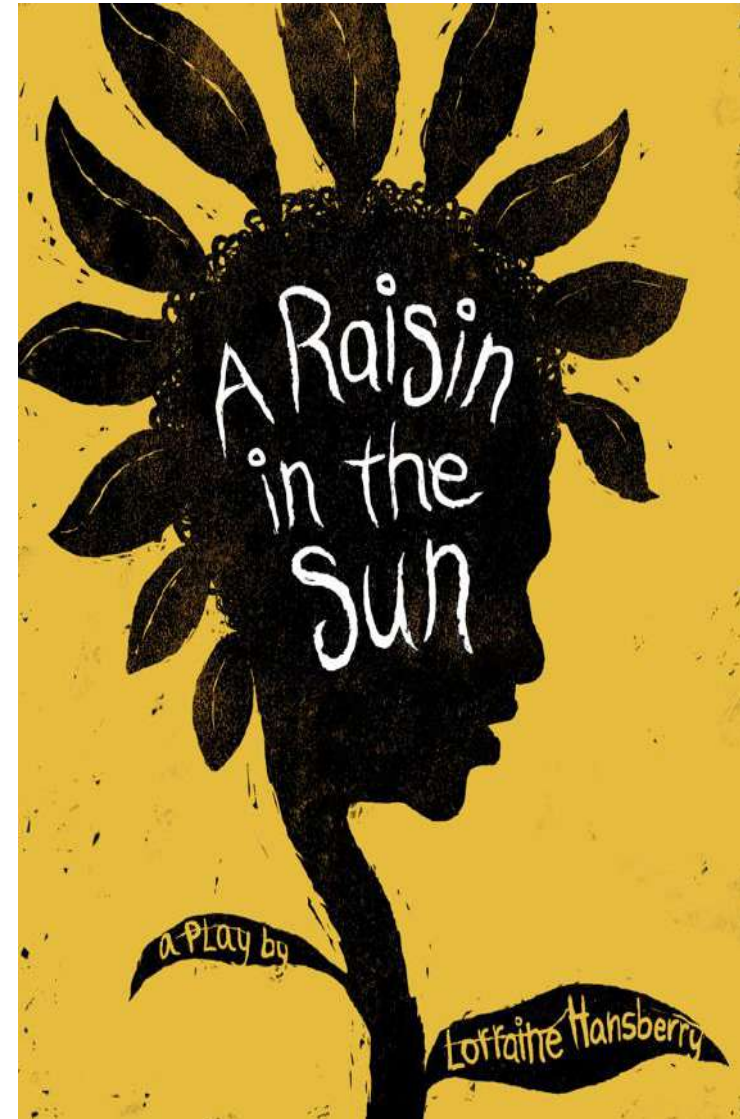
In the beginning of the play, she has straightened hair. But after meeting Asagai, she gets influenced from him. Asagai encourages her to rediscover her African heritage. He criticises Beneatha for assimilating American Culture. Then, she gets Afro hair style which expresses her African identity. Her decision refers to the Natural Hair movement which was followed by many young black woman in the 1960s, which championed the beauty of African-American hair.

Eat your Eggs

Ruth makes eggs for Walter daily. This is her own way of supporting her husband. In one discussion, Ruth asks Walter to be quiet and “eat your eggs”. This signifies Ruth’s difference of opinion with her husband and also her acceptance of the hardships faced by Walter and rest of the Younger family.

Money

Mama gets a cheque Of \$10000 from insurance company after the death of her husband. She sees the money as an opportunity of buying a new spacious house. Similarly, Beneatha sees the money as a way to fund her medical schooling. For Walter, money is an opportunity to start his liquor business.



The End

