

A raisin in the sun summary and analysis

Business



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In every family, each member has their own role to play.

Whether it is the supporter, the dreamer, the realist, the dominant and strong head of the family, from birth we are each given a place to fill in our family. The problem comes when we don't know how to live in our place. Then a person gets lost trying to fill another role because they are not satisfied with where they are. The characters in A Raisin in the Sun are members of a family that have to deal with a member who no longer knows his place in the family and goes on a personal journey to find one. The play's main character, Walter Lee Younger, is struggling with his identity.

Thrashing around drowning in the shortcomings of his life. His main focus throughout the play is getting money. From the opening scenes we see that that seems to be his driving force. The whole family is used to it and even annoyed as whenever he begins to talk about the insurance check or his new idea on how they could earn some great money, everyone brushes him off and tells him to stop thinking about money all the time. Walter Lee can't stop thinking about money because he feels like a failure, but if his plans worked out he would be rich and that equals success in his eyes.

He works a dead end job as a chauffeur for a wealthy white family but he has no education, no status, and no money, to help him succeed.

He dreams a big dream of putting pearls on his wife's neck and being able to give his child, Travis, everything he himself was not able to have. Now, this is a dream most parents have for their families. Who would not want to be able to support their families and never have to see their children struggling? My parents have worked long and hard for their whole lives to give my sister

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and myself a better life so that we would never have to see the poverty they endured.

My mother speaks to me all the time about the projects she grew up in and how she and my grandmother had to share a bedroom, just like Benetha and Lena Younger, after my grandfather died. So I do understand and empathize with Walter Lee, however, he is narrow-minded and in search for a quick fix and some easy money. He believes that will solve all his problems.

He doesn't want to have to go through hurdles and work hard he just wants success and wealth to be delivered to him as easily as the insurance check came. He doesn't realize that the check came easy because his father worked his whole life to earn it for his family.

In Walter Lee's search for his place in life he forgets to look right there amongst his family. He doesn't realize until the end of the play that what the family needs is a man. Not another dreamer. They already have their hands full with Benetha's big ideas on being a doctor and going back to Africa to find her roots.

Benetha is another one who is in search of who she is. She is in search of a way to express herself. An occasionalist, she is unsatisfied with riding lessons, photography, acting and guitar lessons, so she turns to an African man to teach her about Africa, so she can learn about where she came from.

Benetha is portrayed as a smart, modern woman. Her priorities are different from the priorities of most women of the time. While most debutants were in search of a respectable, rich man to marry and be supported by for the rest

of their lives, Beneatha was more concerned with going to med school and being successful in her own right.

She wanted to speak her mind and express her own ideas, and she did so, even if it led her to being reprimanded and slapped by her mother, Lena Younger.

Lena's character was the glue that kept the family together through all the hard times. She tries to understand her children but she lets them know what she will and won't tolerate. She is still the head of the house and the decisions that are made concerning the house are made through her. It was she who went out and put a down payment on a house in an all white area. She knew that it would be difficult to live in a neighborhood where colored people were not welcome but she didn't care because she felt her family deserved it.

When the movers come and she is left alone in the apartment, she pauses at the place where her late husband used to sit and strokes the air around where he would be as if touching his face. This was her moment of peace and saying goodbye not only to the apartment where she lived for most of her life but her chance to say goodbye to the man she loved. She was the nurturer, care taker, and matriarch of the Younger clan. She also was the one who knocked the sense back into her children and daughter-in-law when they had lost their minds.

A God loving and fearing woman she raised her children to go to church every Sunday, respect life, each other and to respect themselves and who they were. This is why she is so disappointed and hurt when Walter Lee

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disregards the family and throws away sixty five thousands dollars into a deal with a man that “ Travis wouldn’t trust with his oldest worn out marble.

” Then in an attempt to save face, he goes to see the man who offered to buy back the house Lena purchased since the all white neighborhood did not want a Negro family moving in. To Lena this meant giving in to the prejudice and racism that for generations her family fought to overcome. For Lena, Walter Lee was agreeing with the people from the white suburban neighborhood, feeling they were not good enough to walk the earth with the rest of the human race. She was crying inside that all her hard work and nurturing was to no avail. She felt pity for Walter Lee and was even more hurt by the fact that her daughter had easily just given up on him, feeling that there was nothing left to love.

This was a no-no. Even in my own family, no matter what a child has done to disgrace the family or how much pain they may have caused, they are still loved. This is how Lena raised her children and she had to remind Beneatha of that. When Mr. Lindner visits the house after being called on by Walter Lee, the women of the house are all sullen and by this time, convinced that Walter Lee is going to accept this man’s bribe and condemn them to the two bedroom “ rat trap” that they were only hours ago eager to leave behind.

So when Walter Lee emerges from his bedroom, his mother tries to plead with him one more time forcing him to face his future in the eyes of his son giving him the opportunity to be a man and do what is right by his son. And for the first time in the play Walter Lee steps up to the plate and takes on his role. He came to his manhood and turned down Mr. Lindner’s offer, giving his

family back the future they almost lost. A Raisin in the Sun is heavily loaded with universal themes. It deals with conflicts of family, religion, dignity, and prejudice.

However, it is not overly emotional. It is well balanced with dramatic scenes and lighter ones with comedic relief. For instance, the way they handled Mr. Lidner's visit, instead of being angered they laughed it off as the man's own stupidity and ignorance. As mentioned previously, the main focus of the play was the story of the Younger family, NOT the story of a black family, the emphasis was not how they deal with outside racism but how they deal with the problems in their own family, struggles we all can relate to whether black, white, purple or blue.

Contemporary audiences can still enjoy A Raisin in the Sun because, even if we don't want to admit it, we see ourselves in the characters.

No matter what generation we are from. We all experience that time in our lives when we are searching for our identity and we become "occasionalists" and "dreamers." I see myself in the characters of Beneatha and Walter Lee, desperately trying to find my way no longer a child but nowhere near a mature adult, wanting to be successful but not yet ready to work, a little scared what the future may hold I store for me.

Years from now I may look back and see myself as Ruth, a hardworking mother trying not to spoil my child but wanting to give them everything. Supportive of my husband, even when he faltering, loving him unconditionally and fighting to make things work.

And when I am all grown up and helping to raise my grandchildren I see myself instilling my children and their families with the lessons I have learned and the values that I have taught them.