

Free research paper about a raisin in the sun – lorraine hansberry

[Literature](#), [Drama](#)



Character analysis of Lena Younger (Mama)

Introduction

The character of Lena Younger in the drama *A Raisin in the Sun* in the year 1959 won the awarded of the New York Drama Critics Circle to be the best character that portrays the most Interesting and one of most important visions of women. The character of Lena Younger evolved from the images of female protagonists in Hansberry's plays. This character was created to portray a female character during the 1950s that evolved from the African and White American plays that confirmed the standards of American stage prior to 1950. During that period the character of an African American woman was portrayed like promiscuous, wanton, immortal, frigid, and pathetically helpless and overbearing that limited the perception of an African American Woman during that time. But the character displayed by Hansberry in his play was quite different from just being a helpless creature that depends on other. The character showed a dominating role that brought a new era and thoughts regarding African American Women after 1950s in America and other places where the film or drama was played.

“ What happens to a dream deferred? Does is dry up like a raisin in the sun? Or fester like a sore- And then run? Does it stink like rotten meat? Or crust and sugar over- Like a syrupy sweet? Maybe is just sags like a heavy load. Or does it explode?” - Langston Hughes, *A Raisin in the Sun* (6)

In the same way the dream of the author has been portrayed in the play as Lena Younger as Mama in the role of a protagonist female character that portrays different character of a women that was usually not found in the

society during that time which made this character play one of the most important part in the story after the hero of the story Walter.

Portrayal of character

In the Story of A Raisin in the Sun by Hansberry, Lena Younger more commonly known as Mama plays a role of mother of the two most important characters of the story Beneatha and Walter Lee as well as the role of being a grandmother of Travis. Travis is son of Walter and Ruth in the story. Here in the drama Lena is a black woman of middle age and is the head of the Younger family. Pamela Loos in her reader's guide says that Hansberry has provided an image of " a determined fighter" in the role of Lena Younger. She says that Hansberry portrays Lena Younger in a different way that explains a feminist portrayal out of the society.

" Lena Younger, the mother, is the black matriarch incarnate, the bulwark of the negro family since slavery, the embodiment of the Negro will to transcendence. It is she, who in the mind of the black poet scrubs the floors of a nation in order to create black diplomats and university professors. It is she, while seeming to cling to traditional restraints, who drives the young on into the fire hoses" (Loos).

This shows how the vision towards a woman has been changed with the help of the portrayal of the character of Lena Younger in the story or in the movie. This overview of the vision of women that has aroused from the character can be supported by providing further analysis. The character portrayal of the story shows how Lena wants to dominate other African American members of the society by beginning with the members of his own family.

This character shows Amusing, inspiring and flattering nature of a woman that acts as an overpowering, taking charge and attacking character in the story. As it is already said that her character is quite different from the character of a woman during that period, with the help of this character, Hansberry shows how a woman can dominate her family or can take a leadership of a society or a family. It shows that woman are not born only to play their household roles in the family but they can have a dominant character and have the capability to take decision on behalf of others.

Structural analysis

The structural analysis of the character of Lena Younger is presented in the following points:

World of the play: It is important to analyze how the character matches itself with the world of the play. In the play *A Raisin in the Sun* by Hansberry presents a situation of period between Second World War and 1959 where a Christian family is portrayed with five members of a poor family living in a small apartment and sharing the bathroom with the other members in the building. The character of Lena Younger has been perfectly place in this scenario which acts as a head of the family and dominates other members of the family. It portrays a situation in which women use to play a lower role in the family, but in our story, it is opposite of the exact scenario of the society (Gomes). This character has been placed in the world of the play to influence the readers or the viewers and motivate them to develop their character as per the portrayal of Mama in the play.

Imagery: The image of the character is quite different from that of a normal

African American woman in the society. During that period, black people were treated as slave in most part of the world. But here in this story the portrayal of Lena shows that how a black woman plays the role of a head of a Christian family and how she dominates others with her leadership characteristics. It shows that how a woman lives her past in poverty and how she plans to improve her present and future by raising her family members out of it.

Character Relationship: The relationship of the character with the play is influencing and her relationship with other characters in the story is properly portrayed to make her play an influencing and dominating role in the play. Lena plays a different character role with each character in the story. She treats each of them differently as per the need of the portrayal of character in the story. Hence it can be said that the character relationship is properly displayed in the play that makes it more interesting for others.

Portrayal of character in the movie

The role of Lena Younger has been efficiently played by Claudia McNeil in the movie *A Raisin in the Sun* by Daniel Petrie. Being a middle age African American Woman, Claudia exactly suites the character of Lena Younger. Her physical appearance is appropriate for the character of Lena Younger. Therefore it can be said that she is the best person casted in the role of Lena Younger in the movie. She has properly played a role of a dominating woman with her dialogue in the movie, “ When the world gets ugly enough—a woman will do anything for her family. The part that’s already living.” (McMahan, Day and Funk). She shows how a middle age African women can

do anything for her family to be safe and can sacrifice her happiness for betterment of her family. As per critics, the movie has won a number of awards that portrays the story of a Negro American family in Chicago after the end of the Second World War. But if we talk about the character of Lena Younger in the movie, it is the best thing to watch motherly love for the family and how a mother sacrifices for the betterment of her son and other family members. Claudia exactly mixed up with the character of Lena Younger and portrayed the character appropriately in the movie.

Critical analysis of portrayal of the character in the movie

I think that the character of Lena Younger has been effectively played by Claudia in the movie that portrays the dominating nature of a woman and shows how a woman can possess leadership quality in herself instead of being from a Negro American family. Though some scenes in the movie is quite different from the play, like the scene where Lena gives money to Walter in the apartment, but in the movie it is showed that she gives him money in the bar. Though the director has changed some scene in the movie to attract the viewers, but as per me he has done injustice with the character of Lena that is portrayed in the play to play a role of a dominating character. The character has been appropriately portrayed in the movie as per the storyline of the drama and its shows how a Negro woman of that period plays an efficient role in the family to keep the members together and unite to fight the injustice of the surrounding world. With the portrayal of the character of Lena in the movie, the vision of women has been changed in the

society. Therefore it can be said that the character has been properly used in the movie to indicate a message to the society.

Conclusion

The character of Lena Younger has been properly used in the drama as well as in the movie that portrays a character of a Negro American Woman who plays role of the head of the family of five members and shows how a mother works for the family to take them out of poverty. The character reveals the ultimate role of a woman as a vision of being hardworking, demanding, determined, controlling, loving, nurturing and sensitive character of a Negro mother. The character of Lena portrays a woman who carries moral strength and demonstrates to be more than just being a black matriarchal figure.

Theme Research

Introduction

A Raisin in the Sun has been written by Lorraine Hansberry who was an African American Woman and wrote this play during the year of 1959 that portrays several themes and factors through the screenplay of the act that contrasted or reflected the present American society during that period. The play has been organized in to three acts that presents the American Dreams and defines the condition of the African American people during that point of time. The main theme of the play is the present situation of an African American family during the 1950s. It can be seen from the above study that how the author has efficiently portrayed her characters in the story to present the theme of the a poor family living in Chicago during the period of poverty all over the world and how they fight for their livelihood and

betterment of the condition in which they live. The story presents the situation of poverty and racism in the society that prevailed during that period. It can be said for this story that the main theme of the play is racism around which the entire theme of the story revolves. It explains how the black people were treated in America during that period and how they fight for their livelihood and for their dreams to come true with a mutual bonding of the members in a family. The actual aim of this research is to study the themes presented in the story and how the writer has made efficient with of the themes to transfer her messages to the readers. In this research several others works are studied and compared to come to a proper result by analyzing the results and findings of the other writers and the general theme of the play.

Literature review

Here in this research several findings of other philosophers have been presented to compared the findings and results of this research and to see the differences between them or how they matches results and findings of this research. The themes of the play have been divided into three categories that are explained below in the following points:

The purpose and value of dreams: The entire play revolves around a theme of fulfillment of a dream to come out of the poverty and lead a better life. It can be seen from the play that each member of the younger family has the same dream of achieving a better environment to live (Hales). Along with this it has been seen that the title also refers to Langston's poem that presents a theme of " deferred dreams" in the play. IT can be seen that the

happiness, mood and depression of the family members also centers on the fulfillment and failure of the dreams that is considered as the main theme of the play. It has been seen in the Act III that the family plans to own their own house that is also presented as a dream of a normal people in the society. It is the desire of the family members and the effort put by each person of the family to fulfill their dreams is the main screenplay of the drama. Therefore it can be said that the story relates the viewers or readers with the American Dreams and how an African family fights to get their dreams fulfilled.

Racism: The most and the biggest theme of this play is racism that is presented all over the screenplay in this drama. Racism is the most important issue that is evident in regular life of the people in Chicago. The play presents members of Younger family as a slave of white people who stays in an apartment segregated in the neighborhood and plays the role of servant for the white people. In this story Ruth plays a role of a housemaid and the role of chauffeur is played by Walter. It has been seen in the story that Youngers does not get the privilege of being human and delivers their life to serve the white masters. Along with it has been seen that the family lacks the opportunity to give money or treat to Travis in the play (Jose). The theme of racism is also presented with the introduction of Karl Lindner in the drama who offers them to live in a white neighborhood. It has been seen by studying the drama that all members of the Younger family face the problem of racism in every prospect of life that greatly affects them.

Family relationship: It has been shown that the Younger family struggled economically and socially all over the play but to fight against the problems they stayed united that presents another theme of the story. It is the

relationship and bonding among the members of the Younger family that is presented as another theme of the drama. In the story it has been shown that how the family members struggle in their daily life for their livelihood and fulfillment of their dreams. Although they faced huge trouble in their regular life, but they stayed united and fight against the problems together being a family. It has been shown in the play that how Beneatha and Walter learn about the value of family at the end of the play. At the start of the play, they acted as strong individuals but by learning the lesson of being a family, they started functioning as a part of Younger family. They found that the dream of the family is more important than their individual dream which made them merge their own dreams with the dream of the entire family.

Results and findings

Discussion

Many critics have said this drama to present a universal theme but it has been said by Robin Bernstein to present a theme of racism and dreams that is portrayed all over the play (Bernstein). It can be seen through the results and findings of the research that there are many more themes that are not discussed by most of the writers because of their supporting roles in the play. The author presents the theme of poverty that is explained with the financial condition of the black peoples in the drama. It also presents the generation conflicts by showing how the mentality of the people of different generations differs. In this play this has been portrayed by presented that the dream of Walter is to open a bar whereas dream of Lena is to own their separate house. The drama also presents the theme of self respect where

Walter feels humiliated when Lena beats him in front of his son. In this drama the theme of tolerance has been presented all over the play and justice has been made with the family at the end of the play were Beneatha and Walter realizes the importance of family and merges their individual dreams with the dream of the family. Hence, it can be said that the theme presented in the drama is more than just racism, dreams of American people and family relationship.

Conclusion

The drama *A Raisin in the Sun* written by Hansberry generally presents the theme of racism in the society during 1950s in Chicago. Along with the theme of racism it also presents great American dreams and how a family fights for fulfilling its dream. Most of the writers have presented these three themes as the major presentation in the drama. But it is found through this research that these three themes are not the only portrayal of the drama that is presented by the author. Some major themes other than these are poverty, class and generation conflicts, love and sex, tolerance, human rights and justice. The author has efficiently presented the themes of the play to transfer her message to the readers and viewers of the play.

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