

# The glass menagerie by tennessee williams and a raising in the sun by lorraine ha...

[Literature](#), [Play](#)



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

The plays, *The Glass Menagerie* by Tennessee Williams and *A Raisin in the Sun* by Lorraine Hansberry, both illustrate how their main characters struggle to overcome the oppressive conditions that they experience in their lives.

The oppressions and depressions faced by major characters are a result of failure or success to achieve their dreams. The major characters of the play *The Glass Menagerie* are Amanda Wingfield, Laura Wingfield, Tom Wingfield, and Jim.

On the other hand, the major characters of *A Raisin in the Sun* are Mama, Walter, Beneatha, and Asagai. All the characters have their own independent lifestyles whereby they have certain ideas and plans in their lives. The two plays reinforce and challenge typical American values according to which people are full of dreams but not able to make them come true because of the kind of life they are living. Some characters like Tom and Laura try to escape the realities of life by confiding on things which keep their mind off their struggles and daily oppressions. The plays depict how families struggle against poverty.

Both Mama and Amanda are single mothers who have children to take care of in a world full of poverty and discrimination. This essay mainly examines the similarities that exist between the plays, *The Glass Menagerie* and *A Raisin in the Sun*, and how they both reinforce and/or challenge typical American values. The major topic on the two plays is individualism and power, and this issue is also illustrated in the essay.

In the play *A Raisin in the Sun* by Lorraine Hansberry, each member of the Younger family has his/her own idea on how to spend \$10, 000 that the

family received from the insurance cover of the deceased Mr. Younger who was the head of the family (Carter 102). For example, Beneatha has a dream of becoming a doctor, and that is why she wants to use the family money to join medical school.

She also hopes that none of the family members is interested in becoming a part of the white world. Walter, on the other hand, wants to put up a liquor store as he believes that running a business is the only way that he can use to save the family from the poverty. Mama, however, wants to buy a house as that was their long dream with the deceased husband.

Despite the fact that Walter's wife, Ruth, is in agreement with Mama's decision, she hopes that her son Travis can get more space and a larger room in the house which is to be bought. However, at the end of the play, the whole family sees the advantages of Mama's dreams of owning a house since it brings the family back together.

Individualism is also present in the play *The Glass Menagerie* by Tennessee Williams, and this is depicted by the way of life that each major character lives. Each member of the Wingfield family is driven into individualism because they have failed to accept the realities of the world. The fact that they are not able to overcome complexity in life draws them into a private fantasy world in which each one finds comfort and real meaning of life that the real world could not offer them.

Laura who is Amanda's only daughter and the sister of Tom Wingfield is extremely shy and crippled which makes her unattractive to men. She drops

out of college; this is an action which greatly disappoints Amanda. Laura, however, hopes that she will be able to make fortune for herself and the family by pursuing a business career which is quite ironical.

After dropping out of school, instead of going back home, she has been wandering the town alone until Amanda finds her and brings her back home. Laura decides to separate herself from the people, thus she plunges into a private world where her closest friends are the animals populated in the glass menagerie. She fancies the animals and spends most of her time with them not caring about what is happening in the outside world.

On the other hand, Tom, Amanda's only son and brother of Laura, despite of having a social life and a job, is discouraged with life because he cannot maintain the family and is constantly scolded by Amanda for it. Tom does not have ordinary friendship with people in the society he is living in; he has neither romantic relationship nor professional success. He is actually living a lonely life which draws him into a world of fantasies inspired and supported by movies, drunkenness and literature (Williams 110).

Amanda as well does not have a good social life, that is why a financial success is something she has always longed for. It is, however, her affection towards these values that has prevented her from recognizing the reality of life. She still longs for her past life where she used to be pampered by her husband.

Amanda blames herself for her children's sorrows and misfortunes as this is something she does not know how she can change. This draws her into a

world of illusions just like Laura and Tom, thus she becomes more pathetic since she leaves in a world of regret and distortion of life reality.

Beneatha in the play *A Raisin in the Sun* is just like Amanda who looks too much into the past. Beneatha is searching for her identity and looks back into her African root, and at the same time, she is examining her American roots. Beneatha has two suitors, one being a Nigerian whom she likes and the other being a wealthy Negro whom she dislikes. Beneatha is one character who found pride in being independent. She never wanted to get married, and at the same time, she did not want to leave America.

Amanda's family and their struggles reinforce American values whereby people do not want to accept the realities of life hence draw into a world of illusions where they feel better not knowing that they are damaging or worsening their situation. Poverty can cause chaos and frustration in families.

Amanda clashes with Tom because he is not able to provide for the family as the mother expects. Amanda disowns and quarrels him a lot; this makes Tom not wish to come back home, but rather stay out and watch movies, avoiding his mother as long as possible. In the play *A Raisin in the Sun*, Younger's family clashes too because of having different competing dreams.

After discovering her state, Ruth fears that the child would put the family members under the financial pressure, hence she opts for abortion. Mama disagrees with the decision made by Walter and his wife hence decides to make payments for her long dream house since she believes that the house

would not only unite them but also provide a dwelling place for the entire family, hence there would no need to consider an abortion. This clearly shows how individualism can cause or bring conflict in a family.

Both Amanda and Mama have power over their families. When the family is divided by different dreams concerning what each member is going to do with the money they have received from the insurance cover of the deceased Mr. Younger, Mama decides to finalize the issue by making payments for the house (Hansberry 130).

Despite the fact that everyone has their own private dreams, Mama has to make the final decision on what the money is going to be used for since she has a certain authority over her children. After some time, Mama's children come to appreciate the decision she has made because the house really unifies the family.

On the other hand, Amanda as well has power over her children, but she cannot control their actions. All she can do is to try her best to ensure that Laura has a good life by taking her to college and looking for a suitor to marry her since she does not want to stay in college because of fear and shyness. Amanda is depressed by the fact that Tom cannot earn enough money to pamper her and Laura since she considers him as the head of the family after her husband abandoned them.

Walter who is the only son of Mama, a defiant husband to Ruth, brother to Beneatha and a loving and caring father to Travis serves in the play as both the contender and the protagonist. Almost all the actions in the play gyrate

around him as he acts as the central character in the play *A Raisin in the Sun*. Just like In *The Glass Menagerie*, Tom makes mistakes, and the way he acts ends up hurting the family.

Throughout the play, Walter is the major cause of conflict in the family until the end of the play when he comes out a hero after refusing to be bribed to move the family out the neighborhood. Tom arises most of the conflicts in the play whereby most of time, he disagreeing and arguing with Amanda for not meeting her expectations of being able to support the family.

On one occasion, he invites a wrong suitor to Laura, someone who already has a fiancé; this hurts Laura more than ever. In the end of the play, he runs away just like his father did leaving Amanda and Laura behind, but their ghosts remain with him wherever he goes (Williams 210).

Just like Tom, Walter also struggles to offer support for the family by trying out new schemes to ensure that he succeeds and earns money to provide food to the table. He is, however, more frustrated by the barriers and the hardship that hinder the family from prospering.

Most of the time, Walter finds himself arguing and fighting with his mother, wife and sister which is a similar case with that of Tom. Walter cannot understand that the only way to help his family is to pay attention to them, given the fact that he is a good listener. Walter, on the other hand, does not run away after finding out that he cannot save the family from poverty; he, therefore, decides to reunite with the family to find strength in it.

In conclusion, this essay has mainly examined the similarities that exist between the plays *The Glass Menagerie* and *A Raisin in the Sun* and how they both reinforce and/or challenge typical American values. The major topics of individualism and power have been discussed and illustrated in the essay.

Carter, Steven. *Hansberry's Drama: Commitment amid Complexity*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1991. Print.

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