

## *A Raisin in the Sun Home Learning*

Anything you need to do/ answer is **highlighted in yellow** and numbered so that you submit your work clearly labelled

Work your way through at a steady pace – it does not all need completing until Friday 17<sup>th</sup> July

Try to read some of the Reading List as well

Keep an eye on Teams/ emails in case we set anything else for you to do

## ACT I

### SCENE I. [Friday morning.]

*The Younger living room would be a comfortable and well-ordered room if it were not for a number of indestructible contradictions to this state of being. Its furnishings are typical and undistinguished and their primary feature now is that they have clearly had to accommodate the living of too many people for too many years—and they are tired. Still, we can see that at some time, a time probably no longer remembered by the family (except perhaps for Mama), the furnishings of this room were actually selected with care and love and even hope—and brought to this apartment and arranged with taste and pride.*

*That was a long time ago. Now the once-loved pattern of the couch upholstery has to fight to show itself from under acres of crocheted doilies and couch covers which have themselves finally come to be more important than the upholstery. And here a table or a chair has been moved to disguise the worn places in the carpet; but the carpet has fought back by showing its weariness, with depressing uniformity, elsewhere on its surface.*

*Weariness has, in fact, won in this room. Everything has been polished, washed, sat on, used, scrubbed too often. All pretenses but living itself have long since vanished from the very atmosphere of this room.*

*Moreover, a section of this room, for it is not really a room unto itself, though the landlord's lease would make it seem so, slopes backward to provide a small kitchen area, where the family prepares the meals that are eaten in the living room proper, which must also serve as dining room. The single window that has been provided for these "two" rooms is located in this kitchen area. The sole natural light the family may enjoy in the course of a day is only that which fights its way through this little window.*

*At left, a door leads to a bedroom which is shared by Mama and her daughter, Beneatha. At right, opposite, is a second room (which in the beginning of the life of this apartment was probably a breakfast room) which serves as a bedroom for Walter and his wife, Ruth.*

Read the rest of Act 1 Scene 1



LO: To explore the presentation relationships in Act 1, Scene 1

All: D	sensibly ordered ideas in a relevant argument with some use of literary critical concepts and terminology
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RUTH  
YOUNGER

- What key details do we learn about Ruth in Act I, Scene I?
- *'We can see that she was a pretty girl ... but now it is apparent that life has been little that she expected, and disappointment has already begun to hang in her face.'*



# Walter Younger

What key details do we learn about Walter in Act 1, Scene 1?

2



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## RUTH & WALTER'S RELATIONSHIP

- *'What's the matter with you?'*
- *'Ain't nothing the matter with me. And don't keep asking me that this morning.'*
- *'First thing a man ought to learn in life is not to make love to no coloured woman first thing in the morning. You all some evil people at eight in the morning.'*
- *'You couldn't be on my side that long for nothing, could you? ... A man needs for a woman to back him up ...'*
- *'(mumbling) We one group of men tied to a race of woman with small minds.'*

# ESSAY PRACTICE

3

- **How have social expectations affected Ruth and Walter?**

## AO1

- Apply concepts and methods from integrated linguistic and literary study as appropriate, using associated terminology and coherent written expression (a well-ordered and coherent argument)

## AO2

- Analyse **ways** in which meanings are shaped in texts

## AO3

- Demonstrate understanding of the significance and influence of the **contexts** in which texts are produced and received

## WALTER & RUTH

4 How would you describe the relationship between Ruth and Walter in the first section of the play?

5 How are they affected by social depravity?





# EXPLORING IDENTITY

6

How much of your identity is tied up in these controlling factors?

- Social Status
- Wealth
- Culture
- Appearance
- Language
- Family
- Education
- Mannerisms



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LO: To explore the presentation relationships in Act 1, Scene 1

*His sister BENEATHA enters. She is about twenty, as slim and intense as her brother. She is not as pretty as her sister-in-law, but her lean, almost intellectual face has a handsomeness of its own. She*

*wears a bright-red flannel nightie, and her thick hair stands wildly about her head. Her speech is a mixture of many things; it is different from the rest of the family's insofar as education has permeated her sense of English—and perhaps the Midwest rather than the South has finally—at last—won out in her inflection; but not altogether, because over all of it is a soft slurring and transformed use of vowels which is the decided influence of the Southside. She passes through the room without looking at either RUTH or WALTER and goes to the outside door and looks, a little blindly, out to the bathroom. She sees that it has been lost to the Johnsons. She closes the door with a sleepy vengeance and crosses to the table and sits down a little defeated.*

**7** WHAT DO WE LEARN ABOUT BENEATHA YOUNGER FROM THE LITERARY DEVICES HANSBERRY USES TO DESCRIBE HER?

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## 8

WHAT DO WE  
LEARN ABOUT  
BENEATHA  
YOUNGER FROM  
THE LITERARY  
DEVICES  
HANSBERRY USES  
TO DESCRIBE HER?

- This first introduction to Beneatha is almost otherworldly, she is intense and uniquely attractive
- Her hair is wild and we can envisage a burst of red in a dingy apartment
- Her voice is a 'mixture of many things' giving it a uniqueness
- She 'passes through the room' like a ghost without acknowledging Ruth or Walter
- Beneatha seems to lack a definitive identity.
- Why might that be a good thing?



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# BENEATHA YOUNGER



## 9

1. How does Beneatha compare to the other two main characters?

- List your ideas. Think about how she behaves, her views, and reactions

E.g. When she sees the bathroom has been taken, she sits down a 'little' defeated and waits.

2. How does disappointment manifest with Ruth?

3. How does Walter react to the busy bathroom?

4. Beneatha has dreams of a more fulfilling life, like Walter. But how is her approach to achieving those dreams different to his?



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Beneatha & identity quotes. **How far is Beneatha an outsider?**



Individually I'd like you to find two key quotations that convey the above.

You must consider the techniques you could comment on...not just a random quote!

Any the same? Let's find different ones.

Let's place them in order of importance.

Use this as the basis of your forthcoming essay.



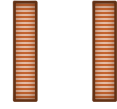
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LO: To explore the presentation relationships in Act 1, Scene 1

# PETAL – How does Beneatha differ from Walter/Ruth?



**P**POINT – What is your first idea?

**E**VIDENCE – Reference a specific part of the text to support your ideas

**T**ECHNIQUE – Are there any key words or language techniques that give greater meaning to your chosen quote?

**A**NALYSE – Explain your ideas and look for meaning beyond what is obvious – ask yourself why Beneatha is different

**L**INK to context and back to the question

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LO: To explore the presentation relationships in Act 1, Scene 1

# Essay practice - How does Beneatha represent a changing society? 12

**P**POINT – What is your first idea?

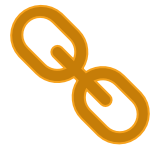
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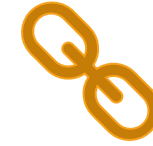
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# Making links to Gatsby



LO: To explore the presentation relationships in Act 1, Scene 1

**How are Nick and Beneatha presented as outsiders from society?**

13

All:

D

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Most:

B-C

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# Mama



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# Mama (Lena) Younger



*Walter exits. Mama enters. She is a woman in her early sixties, full-bodied and strong. She is one of those women of a certain grace and beauty who wear it so unobtrusively that it takes a while to notice. Her dark-brown face is surrounded by the total whiteness of her hair, and, being a woman who has adjusted to many things in life and overcome many more, her face is full of strength. She has, we can see, wit and faith of a kind that keep her eyes lit and full of interest and expectancy. She is, in a word, a beautiful woman. Her bearing is perhaps most like the noble bearing of the Hereros of Southwest Africa—rather as if she imagines that as she walks she still bears a basket or a vessel upon her head. Her speech, on the other hand, is as careless as her carriage is precise—she is inclined to slur everything—but her voice is perhaps not so much quiet as simply soft.*



\*The Herero are an ethnic group inhabiting parts of Southern Africa.



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## QUOTATION ANALYSIS (AOI & 2)

- ‘Well – he’s a little boy. Ain’t supposed to know ‘bout housekeeping.’ (p24)
- ‘We ain’t no business people, Ruth. We just plain working folks.’ (p25)



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## QUOTATION ANALYSIS (AO1 & 2)

- ‘But Lord, child, you should know all the dreams I had ‘bout buying that house and fixing it up and making me a little garden in the back – (*She waits and stops smiling.*) And didn’t none of it happen. (*She drops her hands in a futile gesture.*)’ (p28)



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LO: To explore the presentation relationships in Act 1, Scene 1

A: Crazy 'bout his children! God knows there was plenty wrong with Walter Younger—hard-headed, mean, kind of wild with women—plenty wrong with him. But he sure loved his children. Always wanted them to have something—be something. That's where Brother gets all these notions, I reckon. 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 worthwhile." (She smiles.) He could talk like that, don't you know.

Mama and her late husband Big Walter's dream of owning a home forms the crux of the play. Clinging to a dream deferred for nearly 35 years, Mama recalls Big Walter's statement that it seems "like God didn't see fit to give the black man nothing but dreams," linking the postponement of her dream to racial inequality. Ironically, it is Big Walter's death, with its resulting \$10,000 insurance payment, that makes the realization of Mama's dream possible by the end of the play.

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Quotation	Key words, literary or linguistic techniques	Analysis of techniques	Link to context
<p><i>A woman who has adjusted to many things in life and overcome many more, her face is full of strength. (p23)</i></p>			
<p><b>RUTH</b> No – he don’t half try at all ‘cause he knows you going to come along behind him and fix everything ... you done spoiled that boy so.  <b>MAMA</b> Well – he’s a little boy. Ain’t supposed to know ‘bout housekeeping. (p24)</p>			
<p><b>MAMA</b> We ain’t no business people, Ruth. We just plain working folks. (p25)</p>			
<p><b>MAMA</b> But Lord, child, you should know all the dreams I had ‘bout buying that house and fixing it up and making me a little garden in the back – <i>(She waits and stops smiling.)</i> And didn’t none of it happen. <i>(She drops her hands in a futile gesture.)</i> (p28)</p>			
<p><b>MAMA</b> Now – you say after me, in my mother’s house there is still God. <i>(There is a long pause and Beneatha stares at the floor wordlessly. Mama repeats the phrase with precision and cool emotion.)</i> In my mother’s house there is still God. (p34)</p>			
<p><b>MAMA</b> Well, I always wanted me a garden like I used to see sometimes at the back of the houses down home. This plant is close as I ever got to having one. (p35)</p>			

TASK: USING THE TABLE, ANALYSE THE CHARACTER OF MAMA (LENA) YOUNGER.

15

Complete this comparison table of key points about these 2 characters

Mama Younger	Beneatha Younger
Traditional Woman	Modern, independent woman who does not rely on anyone
	Does not believe in God, and believes that mankind is responsible for his own destiny

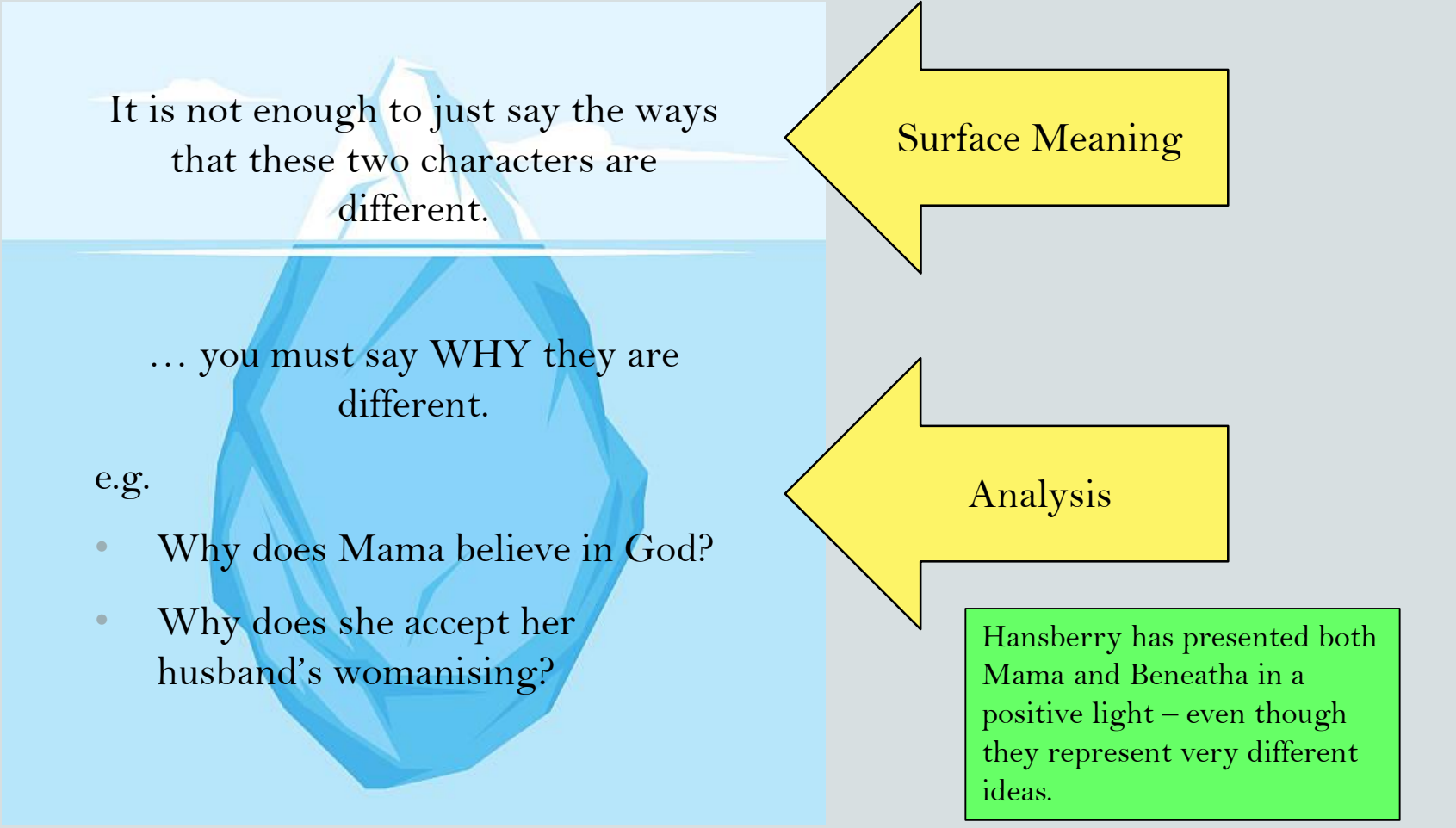


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# How has Hansberry used Beneatha and Mama to present a changing society?

6



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LO: To explore the presentation relationships in Act 1, Scene 1

# CONTEXT: ASSIMILATIONISM & ANTI-ASSIMILATIONISM

- **ASSIMILATIONISM** = The act of encouraging minority cultural groups to be similar to larger cultural groups, often at the cost of suppressing their own cultural habits.
- **ANTI-ASSIMILATIONISM** = The idea that minority groups should not have to adhere to their new country's norms and do everything in the same way e.g. clothing, food. Their own culture is kept and celebrated.

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# 17

How is this theme presented in the play?

# Opinions on African culture

18

- What is Hansberry trying to achieve with this scene?

MAMA: Oh, that's the little country that was founded by slaves way back . . .

BENEATHA: No, Mama—that's Liberia.

MAMA: I don't think I never met no African before.

BENEATHA: Well, do me a favor and don't ask him a whole lot of ignorant questions about Africans. I mean, do they wear clothes and all that—

MAMA: Well, now, I guess if you think we so ignorant 'round here maybe you shouldn't bring your friends here—

BENEATHA: It's just that people ask such crazy things. All anyone seems to know about when it comes to Africa is Tarzan—

MAMA (*indignantly*): Why should I know anything about Africa?

BENEATHA: Why do you give money at church for the missionary work?

MAMA: Well, that's to help save people.

BENEATHA: You mean save them from *heathenism*—

MAMA (*innocently*): Yes.

BENEATHA: I'm afraid they need more salvation from the British and the French.

Heathenism - The practice of a people that do not acknowledge the God of the Bible.

## French and British Colonial Styles

People in Africa were burdened by colonial perceptions of who they were. The British believed Africans were essentially different from Europeans and would stay that way. This point of view invited racism, implying that Africans were not just different but also inferior.

The French, by comparison, were prepared to treat Africans as equals, but only if they learnt to speak French properly and adopted the values of French culture. If they reached a sufficient level of education Africans might be accepted as French citizens. To fall below the required level was to invite charges of racial inferiority.



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## AO3 CONTEMPORARY VIEWS

- Hansberry uses this scene to express her dissatisfaction with most people's distorted perceptions about Africa. In 1959, all that most people knew about Africa was via the broadcasts from the various colonial rulers and/or the Hollywood messages contained in Tarzan movies.
- It is also interesting to note just how American Mama views herself, in opposition to how the majority of Americans view her.



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