

A Raisin in the Sun Study Questions



Act I, Scene One

1. Why does the author go to such lengths to describe the furnishings of the Younger family's apartment? What do these furnishings and the state they are in say about the family's lives?
2. Why does Walter ask Ruth what is wrong with her?
3. Why is Ruth upset when Walter gives Travis the money?
4. Who are Willy and Bobo?
5. Walter says, "Damn my eggs . . . damn all the eggs that ever was!" Why?
6. Who is Beneatha?
7. Why is Mama getting a check for \$10,000?
8. Why does Beneatha say she won't marry George?
9. What is Beneatha's attitude towards God?
10. What happens to Ruth at the end of Act I Scene One?

Act I, Scene Two

1. Who is Joseph Asagai?
2. What does Ruth find out at the doctor's office?
3. Why is Asagai's gift to Beneatha appropriate?
4. What African name has Asagai given Beneatha, and what does it mean? Why is Beneatha satisfied when Asagai translates it for her?
5. What does Mama say is "dangerous"?
6. Where does Ruth actually go instead of the doctor's office?
7. Why does Mama call Walter a disgrace to his father's memory?

Act II, Scene One

1. What is Beneatha's family doing when George comes in?
2. How does the arrival of George Murchison change the mood of the scene?
3. What are "assimilationist Negroes"?
4. Who is Prometheus, and why does George call Walter by that name?
5. What evidence is there that Walter and Ruth still love each other, despite their problems?
6. What does Mama do with her money?
7. What is Walter's reaction to Mama's purchase? Ruth's reaction?
8. What does the absence of light in the Youngers' apartment signify? Why does Ruth so desperately hope for light in the new house?

Act II, Scene Two

1. What sort of woman does George say he wants Beneatha to be? And why doesn't George want to listen to Beneatha's ideas?
2. Why does Mama say that Booker T. Washington is a fool? Do you agree with her?
3. How does Ruth find out Walter hasn't been going to work?
4. Where has Walter been going instead of to work?
5. What does Mama do for Walter?
6. When Walter tells Travis that he wants to hand him the world, what sort of life is Walter envisioning for his family?

Act II, Scene Three

1. Who is Karl Lindner, and why does he visit the Youngers' house?
2. What is Walter's reaction to Lindner?
3. What gifts does Mama get?
4. What news does Bobo bring to Walter?
5. How does Mama react, and to whom does she turn to in this time of trouble?

Act III

1. When Asagai arrives at the apartment, how does his mood contrast with Walter's and Beneatha's?
2. Why does Beneatha say she doesn't want to be a doctor anymore?
3. How does Asagai define "idealists" and "realists"?
4. What does Asagai ask Beneatha to do?
5. When Lindner arrives, why does Mama insist that Travis stay in the room? What does she believe about Walter?
6. What does Walter say to Lindner?
7. What does Mama do with her plant at the end of the play? Why?

A Raisin in the Sun Vocabulary



Act I, Scene One

1. ...its furnishings are typical and **undistinguished**.
2. The boy gives her an **exasperated** look for her lack of understanding and eats grudgingly.
3. She waits several seconds, trying to make up her mind about something, and looks at Ruth a little **tentatively**.
4. Studying her mother-in-law **furtively** and concentrating on her ironing...
5. Dropping her hands in a **futile** gesture.
6. Everybody thinks it's all right for Mama to be a **tyrant**.

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| _____ 1. undistinguished | A. stealthily; expressive of hidden motives |
| _____ 2. exasperated | B. useless |
| _____ 3. tentatively | C. common; nothing special |
| _____ 4. furtively | D. irritated; provoked; irked |
| _____ 5. futile | E. ruler who exercises power in a harsh, cruel manner |
| _____ 6. tyrant | F. uncertainly |

Act I, Scene Two

1. The radio is on and a Southside disk-jockey program is **inappropriately** filling the house with a rather exotic saxophone blues.
2. You mean save them from **heathenism**.
3. Ruth comes in **forlornly** and pulls off her coat with dejection.
4. You wear it well...very well...**mutilated** hair and all.
5. **Assimilationism** is so popular in your country because people need a common culture.
6. **Insinuatingly** to her daughter, she told her to put on her coat.
7. She sets the headdress on **haphazardly**.

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| _____ 1. inappropriately | A. without care; characterized by chance |
| _____ 2. heathenism | B. maimed; damaged |
| _____ 3. forlornly | C. looking pitiful, desperate or hopeless |
| _____ 4. mutilated | D. "religion" of those who don't believe in God and/or are uncivilized |
| _____ 5. assimilationism | E. belief that minority cultures should dissolve into a dominant culture |
| _____ 6. insinuatingly | F. with more meaning than the spoken word; implying |
| _____ 7. haphazardly | G. unsuitably; improperly |

Act II, Scene One

1. **Coquettishly** fanning herself with an ornate oriental fan.
2. With an **arrogant** flourish, turns off the good loud blues that is playing.
3. Oh, don't be so proud of yourself, Bennie - just because you look **eccentric**.
4. It means someone who is willing to give up his own culture and submerge himself completely in the dominant, and in this case **oppressive** culture.
5. If it's too hot or cold for you, just wait a minute and it'll change. (She smiles happily at this **cliché** of clichés.)
6. (To Walter, **sarcastically**), Good night, Prometheus.
7. Mama clamps her lips together, and Ruth advances toward her son **menacingly**.

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| _____ 1. coquettishly | A. tyrannical |
| _____ 2. arrogant | B. in a manner using statements or implications opposite to the underlying meaning |
| _____ 3. eccentric | C. deviating from the established norm, model or rule |
| _____ 4. oppressive | D. threateningly |
| _____ 5. cliché | E. over-used expression or idea |
| _____ 6. sarcastically | F. overbearingly proud; haughty |
| _____ 7. menacingly | G. in a manner befitting a woman who flirts with men |

Act II, Scenes Two and Three

1. Beneatha and George come in, **presumably** from an evening out again.
2. She **rebuffs** him again and he starts to leave.
3. Walter, you ain't been to work for three days. (This is a **revelation** to her.)
4. Finally, in a decisive gesture, he gets up, and, in mingled joy and **desperation**, picks up the money.
5. His happiness is deep in him; he cannot keep still with his new-found **exuberance**.
6. (**Amiably**, as he sits himself easily on a chair, leaning with interest forward on his knees and looking expectantly into the newcomer's face.)
7. ...and the hat is **ludicrous** and considerably oversized.

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| _____ 1. presumably | A. some new information; news |
| _____ 2. rebuffs | B. having unrestrained high spirits; being overjoyed |
| _____ 3. revelation | C. probably; reasonably supposed |
| _____ 4. desperation | D. good naturedly |
| _____ 5. exuberance | E. laughably ridiculous |
| _____ 6. amiably | F. condition of being driven to take almost any risk as a last resort |
| _____ 7. Ludicrous | G. bluntly refuses |

Act III

1. Already, and after such a small defeat, you are worshipping **despair**.
2. What about all the crooks and petty thieves and just plain idiots who will come into power to steal and **plunder** the same as before.
3. Beneatha ignores the eccentricity of his actions and goes on with the **monologue** of insult.
4. The word "Man" has **penetrated** his consciousness; he mumbles...
5. You give him up for me? You done wrote his **epitaph** too...
6. She flies to get it **amid** the general bustling of the family.

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| _____ 1. despair | A. long speech or talk made by one person |
| _____ 2. plunder | B. inscription on a tombstone; summary of a deceased person's life |
| _____ 3. monologue | C. hopelessness |
| _____ 4. penetrated | D. among; in the midst of |
| _____ 5. epitaph | E. to rob of goods by force; loot |
| _____ 6. amid | F. pierced; affected; diffused |