THIS GUIDE CONTAINS:

- Three lesson plans
- Each lesson will take one to two weeks to complete (including out-of-class time)
- Links to resources on literary approaches, readings, and interpretations

TARGET AGE:

• 9 - 12 grade

DISCIPLINE:

ENGLISH/LANGUAGE ARTS



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A Study Guide from Chicago Humanities Festival 2010 CLASSICS IN CONTEXT by KERRY CATLIN

Lorraine Hansberry's *A Raisin in the Sun*

The program on *A Raisin in the Sun* took place at the DePaul Humanities Center. DePaul Theatre School faculty and director of a February 2010 production of the play, Phyllis E. Griffin, and DePaul English Professor, Francesca Royster, led the discussion. Royster discussed strategies for engaging students in the reading and performance of a play, while Griffin focused on autobiographical details of Hansberry's life and work in Chicago and as a female playwright in the late 1950s and early 1960s.

Kerry Catlin moderated the curriculum session and produced the following study guide and lesson plans.

LESSON PLAN: Photo-Essays:

Power Through Pictures

MAMA: Rat trap – (MAMA looks around and leans back and sighs-in sudden reflective mood-.) yes, that's all it is. (smiling) I remember just as well the day me and Big Walter moved in here though. Hadn't been married but two weeks and wasn't planning on living here no more than a year. (She shakes her head at the dissolved dream.) We was going to set away, little by little, don't you know, and buy a little place out in Morgan Park. Even picked out the house. (chuckling a little) Looks right dumpy today. 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.

LINDNER: (more frustrated than annoyed) No, thank you very much. Please. Well-to get right to the point I-(A great breath and he is off at last.) I am sure you people must be aware of some of the incidents that have happened when colored people move into certain areas...

Home, Community, Neighborhood, Space, Place – intensely personal and self-defining. The Younger family crafts an image of themselves that is directly related to their dreams and nightmares. Can you craft an argument of images to reflect a theme from the play?

Age and Discipline: This lesson is most suitable for high school English/Language Arts classes.

Goals:

- Students will translate the print-based content of the play to non-print media as well.
- Students will use the elements of photography,

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

lighting, coloring, positioning, camera angles, framing, and more to make a statement with their photos.

- Students will articulate an argument through visual images.
- Students will explore themes from the play through images.

Objectives:

Students will utilize mixed media skills to communicate an argument.

Timeframe: This lesson can be completed outside of class and should take 1-2 weeks.

PROCESS AND PROCEDURE:

The Assignment: Your group will have the task of creating an original photo-essay. Through a series of pictures, your group must articulate a specific argument. These photos must be original work, and it must be your photos only that communicate your message; there should be no text. The various pictures should work together in some way to give your statement depth, and viewers should be able to explain your argument from dissecting and interpreting your photos. Remember that the ease with which your viewer can uncover your message does not necessarily correlate directly with the success of your project. Try to be sophisticated to give your viewer a chance to interact with your piece.

- 1. After reading and discussing A Raisin in the Sun, ask students to identify themes, motifs, conflicts, etc. in the play
- 2. Assign groups or allow students to pick groups of four to five students.
- 3. Each group can pick a different theme or motif or teacher may ask every group to focus on the

same theme (i.e. racism, assimilation, etc).

- 4. Students work together (outside of class) to create the photo essay project. Students need to consider various aspects of visual argumentation that artists and advertisers have at their disposal.
- 5. Ask students to consider color, lighting, angles, framing, Photoshop, setting, character, movement, and other choices that help convey message.
- 6. Plan and draft your pictures. Be sure that they capture what you need them to capture before you move on to the next frame. Take more pictures than you need so that you can choose the most effective shots. Think about the drafting and revision process as you complete this project.
- 7. Groups should mount their project in an easy-to-display manner.

DIGGING DEEPER

Have students create a photo essay about their own neighborhood. Be sure that students make an argument about their environment (i.e. the effects of gentrification, neighborhood justice/injustice, etc.)

- a. Neighborhood exchange ask students to visit another student's neighborhood and write about the experience.
- b. Assign neighborhoods for students to visit and respond to the experience.
- c. Ask students to visit a photography exhibit and write about observations.

LESSON PLAN: Literary Theory

Are Mama and Ruth archetypal mothers in their primitive nurturing and protective nature? Is Beneath a feminist in her attempt to break out of the constraints of patriarchal society? Is Walter a failure as a "man"? In what ways do the Younger family represent the economic, class, and ideological determinants of the society they live in? How much of Lorraine Hansberry's personal political beliefs, sexuality, and philosophy is present in the play? What is your response to *A Raisin in the Sun*? What's really happened or not happened in the play? How do we construct meaning from the play based solely on it structure? In other words, how do we apply literary theory to reading *A Raisin in the Sun*?

Age and Discipline: This lesson is most suitable for high school English/Language Arts classes.

Goals:

- Students will learn to read from a multiplicity of literary perspectives.
- Students will develop the intellectual flexibility they need to read not only literary texts but the cultural texts that surround them.
- Students will see what factors have shaped their own world view and what assumptions they make as they evaluate the perspectives of others, whether a character from a text, an author or playwright, or a piece of literature.

Objectives:

Students will use the many critical lenses of literary theory as a guide when reading and discussing *A Raisin in the Sun*

Materials: Copies of the play and copies of handout, "Literary Theories: A Sampling of Critical Lenses."

Timeframe: This lesson will take 1-2 weeks.

PROCESS AND PROCEDURE:

- 1. Distribute handout, "Literary Theories: A Sampling of Critical Lenses." Discuss literary theory and how it can be used as a tool for reading and making sense of perspective in text whether political, social, cultural, etc.
- 2. Form groups around the nine literary theories of: Archetypal, Feminist, Marxist, New Criticism, Psychological and Psychoanalytic, Reader-Response, Deconstruction, Historical, and Structuralism.
- 3. Let each group know that they are responsible for conducting a discussion or presentation on their literary theory following the reading of the play.
- 4. Read the play aloud in class. Students should be looking for instances that support the certain perspective or critical arc they are following through the play. Pause at times to illustrate a discovery or interesting point so students understand the process and begin to take initiative. Look for examples that especially illustrate the ability to look at the text through multiple texts.
- 5. Allow time at the end of each class period for the groups to gather and discuss the day's reading in terms of their critical lens.
- 6. After you have finished the play, schedule discussion time for each group to present their findings, lead the class in a discussion of the literary theory in terms of the play, and offer feedback.

DIGGING DEEPER:

- 1. Assign a literary analysis essay where students analyze a chosen or assigned theory as it applies to the play. Students could also compare/contrast two or more theories.
- 2. Ask students to evaluate multiple perspectives in non-print forms: a movie, video, commercial, song, peer pressure, school system, political event, etc.

Use *Critical Encounters in High School English: Teaching Literary Theory to Adolescents* as a resource (Deborah Appleman, 2000 by Teachers College Press, Columbia University)

Assessment: Evaluation of participation in class discussion, and/or written analysis paper.

LESSON PLAN: How to Read a Play

"Plays are meant to be watched or read aloud..." Yes, but how do we discuss the elements of drama? How do we conduct a discussion of character, theme, action, dialogue, etc. while reading A Raisin in the Sun?

Age and Discipline: This lesson is most suitable for high school English/Language Arts classes.

Goals:

- · Students will learn the "Elements of Drama."
- Students will compare and contrast the elements of drama to other literary forms.
- Students will learn how to read a play.

Objectives:

Students will use the "Elements of Drama" to read and analyze A Raisin in the Sun.

Materials: A copy of A Raisin in the Sun

Timeframe: This lesson will take 1 day to complete.

PROCESS AND PROCEDURE:

1. Discuss Aristotle's "Elements of Drama" as found in *Poetics:*

"Elements of Drama"

Most successful playwrights follow the theories of playwriting and drama that were established over two thousand years ago by Aristotle. In his works the *Poetics* Aristotle outlined the six elements of drama in his critical analysis of the classical Greek tragedy *Oedipus Rex* written by the Greek playwright, Sophocles, in the fifth century B.C. The six elements as they are outlined involve: Thought, Theme, Ideas; Action or Plot; Characters; Language; Music; and Spectacle.

Thought/Theme/Ideas

What the play means as opposed to what happens (the plot). Sometimes the theme is clearly stated in the title. It may be stated through dialogue by a character acting as the playwright's voice. Or it may be the theme is less obvious and emerges only after some study or thought; the abstract issues and feelings that grow out of the dramatic action.

Action/Plot

The events of a play; the story as opposed to the theme; what happens rather than what it means. The plot must have some sort of unity and clarity by setting up a pattern by which each action initiating the next rather than standing alone without connection to what came before it or what follows. In the plot of a play, characters are involved in conflict that has a pattern of movement. The action and movement in the play begins from the initial entanglement, through rising action,

climax, and falling action to resolution.

Character

These are the people presented in the play that are involved in the perusing plot. Each character should have their own distinct personality, age, appearance, beliefs, socio economic background, and language.

Language

The word choices made by the playwright and the enunciation of the actors of the language. Language and dialog delivered by the characters moves the plot and action along, provides exposition, defines the distinct characters. Each playwright can create their own specific style in relationship to language choices they use in establishing character and dialogue.

Music

Music can encompass the rhythm of dialogue and speeches in a play or can also mean the aspects of the melody and music compositions as with musical theatre. Each theatrical presentation delivers music, rhythm and melody in its own distinctive manner. Music is not a part of every play. But, music can be included to mean all sounds in a production. Music can expand to all sound effects, the actor's voices, songs, and instrumental music played as underscore in a play. Music creates patterns and establishes tempo in theatre. In the aspects of the musical the songs are used to push the plot forward and move the story to a higher level of intensity. Composers and lyricist work together with playwrights to strengthen the themes and ideas of the play. Character's wants and desires can be strengthened for the audience through lyrics and music.

Spectacle

The spectacle in the theatre can involve all of the aspects of scenery, costumes, and special effects in a production. The visual elements of the play created for theatrical event. The qualities determined by the playwright that create the world and atmosphere of the play for the audience's eye.

2. Read A Raisin in the Sun aloud in class. Teacher should model discussion techniques by stopping at points in the text to discuss an interesting element, raise a question, make a prediction, discuss characterization, etc. Here are a few ideas to look for:

When reading a play, look at the interaction between:

o language (arguably the primary source of energy in a play)

o action (the physical expression of that energy which is often mirrored in or commented upon by the language)

o character (which plays often focus on as the central concern---e.g., what does the main character want more than anything else?)

o visual details and imagery (especially as reflected in the setting)

o stage directions (which offer sometimes crucial details as to how a scene should be read depending on how specific the playwright was in their directions)

o form and function: how many scenes, acts; what dictates the break between scenes and acts? For example, Shakespeare always has five acts which neatly conform to the traditional rising/falling/

resolution pattern we associate with stories.

3. After modeling for a day or two, ask students to lead the analysis. Students can stop the reading when they have a question, observation, realization, etc. Continue this process as you read the play.

4. You may consider assigning students or groups to trace a certain element, character or theme throughout the play and lead discussion.

DIGGING DEEPER:

1. Ask students to write a paper analyzing one of the elements of drama and how it is used in the play.

2. Ask students to be the Director. How would you direct this play? What choices would you make about each of the elements?

Assessment: Evaluation of participation in class discussion, and/or written analysis paper.

CLASSICS IN CONTEXT

Classics in Context is a series of seminars that take a fresh look at universally established and contemporary literary classics. Offered to area educators by the Chicago Humanities Festival, the four programs consist of lectures by university faculty on a classic literary work, followed by a discussion with a curriculum developer on strategies for integrating the text into their classrooms.

The 2010 Classics in Context Program included: Confabulario and Other Inventions by Juan Jose Arreola, cosponsored by the Center for Latin American Studies at the University of Chicago, featuring Professor Mauricio Tenorio and Nelly Palafox; Frankenstein by Mary Shelley, cosponsored by the Franke Institute for the Humanities at the University of Chicago, featuring Professors Heather Keenleyside and Timothy Campbell; A Raisin in the Sun by Lorraine Hansberry, cosponsored by the DePaul Humanities Center, featuring Professor Francesca Royster and director Phyllis E. Griffin; and As I Lay Dying by William Faulkner, cosponsored by the Alice Kaplan Institute for the Humanities at Northwestern University, featuring Professor Julia Stern.

ABOUT THE CHICAGO HUMANITIES FESTIVAL

The Chicago Humanities Festival (CHF) creates year-round opportunities for people of all ages, backgrounds, and economic circumstances to explore, to enjoy, and to support the arts and humanities. We accomplish this by presenting programs throughout the year, culminating in two annual Festivals of the Humanities, one in the spring specifically for children and families and one in the fall for the general public. CHF's mission of providing broad access to the humanities—at a low ticket price—depends in part on the generosity of its committed and enthusiastic supporters.

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