

***A Raisin in the Sun* and Dreams Deferred**

Museum Connection: Art and Enlightenment

Purpose: In this lesson students will analyze the Langston Hughes' poem from which the play's title originates and apply Hughes' message to the characters in the play. Then, students will examine their own dreams and the dreams of people who are represented in the Reginald F. Lewis Museum from the perspective of Hughes' poem.

Course: 10th grade World Literature, American Literature or Theatre Arts

Time Frame: This lesson requires two 45-minute class periods after the students have finished reading the play.

Correlation to State Standards:

Standard 1: The student will comprehend and interpret a variety of print, non-print and electronic texts, and other media.

Indicator 1.2 The student will comprehend and interpret a variety of texts, including fiction, nonfiction, poetry, drama, and informational texts.

Objective: 1.2.4 The student will interpret a literary work by using a critical approach (e.g. reader response, historical, cultural, biographical, structural)

Standard 2: The student will analyze and evaluate a variety of print, non-print and electronic texts, and other media.

Indicator 2.1 The student will analyze and evaluate a variety of texts, including fiction, nonfiction, poetry, drama, and informational texts.

Objective 2.1.3 The student will analyze connections between and among themes, ideas, and/or styles of two or more texts.

Common Core State Reading Standards for Literature 6-12

- Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text, including determining where the text leaves matters uncertain.

- Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in the text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the cumulative impact of specific word choices on, meaning and tone (e.g., how the language evokes a sense of time and place; how it sets a formal or informal tone).

Objectives: Students will analyze various reactions to setbacks in their own lives and in African American history by examining Langston Hughes’ his poem, “Harlem.”

Vocabulary and Concepts:

Word or Concept	Definition
Deferred	postponed or delayed.
Simile	a comparison between two unlike things using “like” or “as.”
Rhetorical question	question asked to produce an effect or to make an assertion, not to elicit a reply.
Imagery	figurative description or illustration.

Materials:

For the Student:

- Student Resource Sheet 1: Vocabulary Organizer
- Student Resource Sheet 2: Hughes’ Six Similes
- Student Resource Sheet 3: Lewis Museum Visit

Resources:

Publications:

Hansberry, Lorraine. *A Raisin in the Sun: a Drama in Three Acts*. New York: Random House, 1959. Print.

Web Sites:

For vocabulary organizers:

<http://wvde.state.wv.us/strategybank/VocabularyGraphicOrganizers.html>

For an oral reading of “Harlem”:

<http://www.learner.org/catalog/extras/vvspot/video/hughes.html>

For analysis of vocabulary: <http://dictionary.reference.com/>

For information on Langston Hughes: <http://www.poets.org/poet.php/prmPID/83>

For analysis of “Harlem”:

http://poetry.suite101.com/article.cfm/hughes_harlem_a_dream_deferred

For information on Lorraine Hansberry:

<http://womenshistory.about.com/od/aframerwriters/p/hansberry.htm>

For analysis of *A Raisin in the Sun*: <http://www.literature-study-online.com/essays/hansberry.html>

Historical Background:

Langston Hughes

“James Langston Hughes was born February 1, 1902, in Joplin, Missouri. His parents divorced when he was a small child, and his father moved to Mexico. He was raised by his grandmother until he was thirteen, when he moved to Lincoln, Illinois, to live with his mother and her husband, before the family eventually settled in Cleveland, Ohio. It was in Lincoln, Illinois, that Hughes began writing poetry. Following graduation, he spent a year in Mexico and a year at Columbia University. During these years, he held odd jobs as an assistant cook, launderer, and a busboy, and travelled to Africa and Europe working as a seaman...”

For more historical background on Langton Hughes and selected bibliographies open this link: <http://www.poets.org/poet.php/prmPID/83>

Lorraine Hansberry and *A Raisin in the Sun*

“Lorraine Hansberry (1930-1965) analyzes northern racism and its cruel effects in her play *A Raisin in the Sun*, which she claims is "specifically [about] Southside Chicago" (Hansberry. *YGB* 114). Many social issues of the 1950's, including feminism, gender roles, the Black family, and the pan-African movement, as well as events within Hansberry's own life, are interweaved in this play. However, a central theme of *A Raisin in the Sun* reveals how racism from the housing industry, government, religious leaders, and average Americans supported the segregated housing environment of Chicago...”

For more background on **Lorraine Hansberry and *A Raisin in the Sun*** open this link: <http://www.literature-study-online.com/essays/hansberry.html>

Lesson Development:

Motivation:

1. Direct students to write a quickwrite describing a personal dream that has not been realized. It may be an individual dream (to save money to buy a skateboard), a cooperative dream (to win the soccer championship), a family dream (to take a trip to California). After they write, direct the students to draw a symbol that represents this dream. Then, direct them to make a list of obstacles that impeded their ability to achieve this dream.

Procedures:

2. Use the vocabulary graphic organizer provided as **Student Resource Sheet 1: Vocabulary Organizer** or one of your choice from <http://wvde.state.wv.us/strategybank/VocabularyGraphicOrganizers.html> to introduce students to the word “deferred.” The organizer may be completed individually, in small groups, or as a class. Direct students to dictionaries or <http://dictionary.reference.com/> to complete the organizer.
3. Direct students to read Langston Hughes’ poem, “Harlem” which is found just after the title page of the play. As they read, they should complete the first two columns of **Student Resource Sheet 2: Hughes’ Six Similes** which require them to identify the six similes that Hughes presents to describe the effect of a dream deferred. Discuss students’ responses to ensure that they have understood the poem. Notice the rhetorical questions and the imagery in the poem.
4. Ask students to name the characters in the play that have unrealized dreams. They should mention every character in the play. List these characters on the board. Then, direct students to complete the third column of **Student Resource Sheet 2: Hughes’ Six Similes**. Discuss.
5. Have student return to their quickwrites from the beginning of the period and have them attach their dream to one of Hughes’ metaphors just as they did with the characters from the play.

Assessment:

6. Direct students to write a paragraph (perhaps a continuation of their quickwrite) that explains why this simile suits their dreams that were deferred. Have them

consider how their unrealized dream is like and unlike Hughes' description. Encourage them to write their own simile that could be added to Hughes' poem. The additional simile must be different than the others in order to show an emotion or effect that is different from the six that Hughes describes.

7. Direct students to form small groups and discuss why Hansberry titled her play, *A Raisin in the Sun*. Is this the most appropriate title or should she have titled it using another of Hughes' similes? Should the play have been titled, *A Sore, Rotten Meat*, *A Syrupy Sweet*, *A Heavy Load*, or *Explode* instead? They should share their explanations with the class in discussion format.

Closure:

8. Direct students to search the Internet or the daily newspaper to find a story about a person whose dream has been deferred. They may find a contemporary figure or someone from history, someone who is famous or an everyday person, an adult or a child. Direct them to write a journal entry from the first person point of view of this person answering the question, "What happens to a dream deferred?" They must incorporate at least one of Hughes' simile in the journal entry.

Thoughtful Application(s):

- This lesson could be used with any piece of literature that involves dreams that have been deferred or unrealized. For instance, students could consider George and Lennie's dream in *Of Mice and Men*, Jay Gatsby's dream in *The Great Gatsby*, Hester and Dimmesdale's dream in *The Scarlet Letter*, Elie Wiesel's dream in *Night*, the lovers' dream in *Romeo and Juliet*, etc.
- The lesson could be used to discuss historical figures that are studied in social studies and history classes.
- Read background information on Langston Hughes and consider how "Harlem" reflects his own life experiences.

Lesson Extensions:

- When visiting the Lewis Museum, students will use **Student Resource Sheet 3: Lewis Museum Visit** to guide their note taking in the museum. As they view the exhibits at the museum, they will record people who have had the reactions that Hughes describes to their deferred dreams.

- Students can find artwork that depicts dreams, dreamers, and unrealized dreams.
- Students may rewrite Hughes' poem to have a positive tone by answering the question, "What happens to a dream achieved?" Individually or in groups, students imitate Hughes' poem by writing six similes about dreams that have been reached.

Student Resource Sheet 1: Vocabulary Organizer

Vocabulary Word: “deferred”		
Synonyms for “deferred”	Things that are associated with the word “deferred”	Antonyms for “deferred”
A symbol depicting “deferred”		

Student Resource Sheet 2: Hughes' Six Similes

Directions: As you read, “Harlem” which Hansberry uses in the introduction and title of her play, identify the six similes that answer, “What happens to a dream deferred?”

What is Hughes' simile?	Explain the simile in your own words. Explain how this outcome of an unrealized dream is different from the other five.	Which characters from the play react to their deferred dreams in this manner? Explain.
<i>The dream dries up like a raisin in the sun.</i>		

Student Resource Sheet 3: Lewis Museum Visit

Directions: As you tour the Lewis Museum, find examples of people who have had their dreams deferred. List their names and a brief description of their experiences in one of the categories.

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 over—like a syrupy sweet?

Maybe it just sags like a heavy load.

Or does it explode?