# 11th-12th Grade Reading and Writing Assignment

This assignment is **partially aligned** to the standards.



***A Raisin in the Sun***

Extended Response Questions

1. What is the theme of the play *A Raisin in the Sun*? Support your answer with evidence from the text.
2. How do Mama’s actions prevent Walter from growing up and taking on the role of the head of the family? Why do you think she realizes she might be to blame for this?
3. “We ain’t no business people, Ruth. We just plain working folks.” Why does the author choose to have Mama say this? What is the significance to other characters in the play?
4. The preface of *A Raisin in the Sun* begins with Langston Hughes’ poem “Harlem (a Dream Deferred)”. Why does the author choose to use this poem to begin the play?

Overview

After reading "A Raisin in the Sun," by Lorraine Hansberry, 11th grade students respond to extended response questions. The assignment exposes students to a worthwhile, grade-appropriate text but not all of the accompanying questions sufficiently reach the depth of the grade-level standards.

About the Text

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| Title and Author | “A Raisin in the Sun” by Lorraine Hansberry |
| What is the Lexile Level of this text? | As a “non-prose” (NP) text, the play does not have a Lexile level. |
| Based on Lexile, which grades is this text intended for? | N/A |
| Is the text qualitatively complex enough for the grade? | Yes |
| Is this text fiction or non-fiction? | Fiction |
| Is this text authentic or was it written for educational purposes? | Authentic |
| Does the text provide sufficient detail to build knowledge of a worthwhile topic and/or is it worth reading closely and re-reading? | Yes |

Related Standards

**RL.11-12.2 Determine two or more themes or central ideas of a text and analyze their development over the course of the text, including how they interact and build on one another to produce a complex account.**

The assignment is **weakly aligned** to this standard. The standard requires students to examine two or more themes. The first question specifically asks students to identify a theme, but there is no expectation of analysis of the themes development over the course of the text or how the themes interact and build to produce a complex account. It is a simplistic question that much younger students should be able to do.

**RL.11-12.3: Analyze the impact of the author’s choices over the course of a text regarding how to develop and relate elements of a story or drama.**

The assignment is **partially aligned** to this standard. There is an attempt in questions three to examine the impact of the author’s choices, but it isn’t asking students to discuss how these choices develop and relate elements of a drama. By using the language from the standard to draft this question would help the question reach the depth of the standard.

**RL.11-12.5 Analyze how an author’s choices concerning how to structure specific parts of a text contribute to its overall structure and meaning as well as its aesthetic impact.**

The assignment is **partially aligned** to this standard. The fourth question has the potential to be strong as it asks students to consider two texts and explain why the author chose the poem to include in the preface. Framing the question with more language from the standard that directed students to consider why the author chose the poem for the preface and how it contributed to the overall structure and meaning of the play as well as how it impacted the aesthetic.

Why is this assignment partially aligned?

This assignment is **partially aligned** because the text is strong, but all of the questions are not:

**The assignment exposes students to a noteworthy, grade-appropriate play**. This 1959 play is historically significant and valuable for students to read: it was the first by an African American woman to be staged on Broadway, and it’s richly specific about the indignities suffered by many African American families during the time period. The text offers ample opportunity for meaningful writing and discussion around race and segregation.

**The accompanying task does not require deep analysis of the play.** The questions make a solid attempt to address the standards but fall short of reaching the depth. Some of the questions are not designed around grade-level standards such as one and two. Question two, asks students to consider how a character develops over time. This falls more in line with the previous grade band standard: *RL.9-10.3 Analyze how complex characters develop over the course of a text, interact with other characters and advance the plot or develop themes*. While this might be a scaffolded question to build understanding, it doesn’t represent the standards considered for this grade-level.

**Students have some opportunity to use evidence to substantiate their ideas**. Students are not always explicitly asked to cite evidence from the text, but the structure of most of the questions does require a knowledge of the play to satisfactorily write the extended response.

**This assignment could be stronger if it required students to engage in a more rigorous analysis**. The questions could prompt students to demonstrate understanding of the themes and how they interact and build throughout the play. A tighter connection to the standards around author choice needs to be considered. The analysis of choice is about story elements of a drama and separately about structuring specific parts of the play.