

A Raisin in the Sun Reading Questions

Act I, Scene I

1. The stage directions say that the living room in the Younger apartment might be comfortable and well-ordered, but "weariness" has "won in this room." What physical details of the living room set show these qualities?
2. What details of the setting show that the apartment is crowded?
3. Walter's wife, Ruth, is described as a pretty "girl," who is changing into a "settled woman." What has happened to change Ruth's beauty?
4. How does the apartment building itself create problems for the Younger family as they begin the day?
5. When Walter comes into the living room, what thoughts are on his mind? What does he ask Ruth?
6. When is the check coming?
7. Walter tells Ruth that she looks young this morning and calls her "baby." What do his remarks and Ruth's responses reveal about their relationship?
8. When Walter's son, Travis, comes out of the bathroom, what does he ask?
9. Walter and Ruth react differently when Travis asks for money for school. What are Walter's and Ruth's attitudes about money?

10. Ruth tells Walter she doesn't want to know what he has been thinking about Why? What has Walter been thinking about?
11. How does Walter think women should treat their men?
12. How does Ruth react to Walter's desire for her support?
13. Describe the immediate exchange of words between Walter and his sister, Beneatha, when she comes into the living room.
14. What are Beneatha's hopes for her own future? Why is Walter concerned about Beneatha's plans?
15. What sacrifices does Walter say have been made for Beneatha's sake? How does Beneatha react when she hears this? How does their conversation end?
16. Why does Walter return to the apartment? What does he do?
17. How is Mama described in the stage directions?
18. What does Mama retrieve when she opens the window? What is unique about this object?
19. How does Mama interfere in Ruth's life?
20. In conversations with Ruth and Beneatha in this scene. Mama's values become more clear. How

does Mama feel about money?

21. What kind of man was Big Walter? Why does Mama claim he worked himself to death?
22. How much does Mama value religion? How does she react to Beneatha's denial of God?
23. Mama compares her plant to her children. How are the plant and the children alike? What does the plant symbolize to Mama?
24. What does Mama ask Ruth to do at the end of this scene? What happens to Ruth?

Act I, Scene II

25. When does Scene II begin? What are Mama and Beneatha doing as this scene begins? What is Walter doing?
26. Who does Beneatha invite to the apartment? How does she tell Mama to act around this person?
27. What is revealed about Ruth and where she has been? What is she thinking about doing, and why might she be considering such a thing?
28. Asagai arrives, bringing gifts for Beneatha. What are the gifts?
29. What does Asagai represent to Beneatha? What does Asagai say and do to encourage Beneatha's search for her identity?

30. Soon after Asagai leaves, the mail carrier delivers the insurance check. How much is the check worth? Why does Mama's expression become sober and then unhappy when she holds the check?
31. Walter rushes in demanding to know whether the check has arrived. How does he show his insensitivity to the situation at home?
32. What evidence shows that Walter is not entirely selfish in wanting to have the insurance money?
33. How do Walter's and Mama's views of the meaning of life conflict?
34. How does Mama try to influence Walter at the end of the scene? What does she reveal to him?

Act II, Scene I

35. When does Act II begin? What is Beneatha doing as the first scene opens? What is she wearing?
36. Why does Walter join her in the dance?
37. How does the arrival of George Murchison change the mood of the scene?
38. Beneatha calls George an "assimilationist." What does she mean by that?
39. What is Walter's attitude toward George?
40. What is George's attitude toward Walter?

41. Who is Prometheus, and why does George call Walter by that name?
42. How does Ruth try to ease Walter's mood?
43. What evidence is there that Walter and Ruth still love each other, despite their problems?
44. What news does Mama break to the family in this scene?
45. How do Ruth and Walter react to Mama's news? What does Walter accuse Mama of?

Act II, Scene II

46. When does Scene II begin? In what condition is the apartment when Beneatha arrives home from a date with George?
47. What sort of woman does George say he wants Beneatha to be? And why doesn't George want to listen to Beneatha's ideas?
48. When Beneatha asks George why he goes to college, what is his reply?
49. After George leaves, Mama asks Beneatha if she had a good time on her date. Beneatha replies that George is a fool. Why does she say this?
50. Why does Beneatha thank her mother?

51. How does Ruth find out that Walter has not been to work for three days? What has Walter been doing instead of going to work?
52. How does Mama react to Walter's explanation of where he's been? What does she give Walter, and how does Walter react to being entrusted with it?
53. 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 III

54. Beneatha and Ruth are busy packing when Ruth tells Beneatha how happy she is with the change in Walter. What are three examples that show Walter has changed in the past week?
55. Why does Mr. Lindner come to the Youngers' apartment?
56. Why don't the residents of Clybourne Park want the Youngers in their neighborhood?
57. How does Walter react to Lindner's offer?
58. What is significant about Mama's preparing her plant for the move as she listens to the details of the encounter with Lindner?
59. How does Walter respond to Mama's determination?

60. What gifts does the family give Mama? Why are the gifts appropriate?
61. Why doesn't Walter answer the door immediately when the bell rings?
62. Who is at the door? What news does this person bring, and how does Walter react to the news?
63. How does Mama react, and to whom does she turn to in this time of trouble?

Act III

64. When does Act III begin? What are Walter and Beneatha doing? When Asagai arrives at the apartment, how does his mood contrast with Walter's and Beneatha's?
65. How has the loss of the money changed Beneatha's optimism? What does she tell Asagai? What is Asagai's response?
66. Throughout this scene, the stage directions say Walter is listening to Beneatha JIK Asagai talk. What is Walter's reaction to their conversation?
67. How does Asagai define idealists and realists? Which group does he prefer to be associated with?
68. What alternative view of the future does Asagai offer to put Beneatha's depression in perspective?
69. Asagai leaves, and Walter comes into the living room. How does Beneatha attack Walter? What does Walter do?

70. How is Mama's resignation evident in her changed physical appearance? Why does Mama put her plant back on the windowsill?
71. Who does Mama blame for the current situation, and how does she plan to deal with it?
72. Up until now, Ruth has been the practical one. How does she react to Mama's resignation?
73. When Walter arrives back home, what does he say he has done? And what does Walter plan to do?
74. Describe Walter's new view of life as being divided between the "takers" and the "taken."
75. What does Mama mean when she tells Walter that if he takes Lindner's money he will have nothing left inside?
76. Beneatha says Walter is no brother of hers. What lesson does Mama have to remind Beneatha about?
77. When Lindner arrives, why does Mama insist that Travis stay in the room? What does she believe about Walter?
78. What does Walter tell Lindner? Why? Why does Lindner decide to appeal to Mama? What is her response?
79. Even though they love one another and have just acted heroically, the play ends with Walter and Beneatha arguing again. What do their actions now say about them as "heroes"?

80. What change do both Mama and Ruth find in Walter?

81. What is the importance of having Mama return to the empty apartment to grab her plant?