

In this unit, students study characters in two genres: a short story and a play. They consider how the ways characters interact with one another and respond to conflict help them understand each character and shape the themes of the text. Students read "Sucker," a short story by Carson McCullers, and *A Raisin in the Sun*, a play by Lorraine Hansberry. Both texts are grounded in an understanding of how people facing hardships might both support and harm the people around them, and both texts provide students with rich opportunities to observe the growth and change of characters. In addition, Lorraine Hansberry's groundbreaking play allows students multiple ways to discuss and analyze issues of individual and cultural identity, familial obligations, and differing notions of success, all through the eyes of family members who pull together in spite of the challenges society places upon them and their dreams.

NOTE: As students read *A Raisin in the Sun*, they will find that the characters speak in the vernacular, and occasionally use terms that are offensive. The play is set in the 1950s, and the main characters are members of a Black family trying to move forward with their lives. Students will note the ways in which the family's dreams are thwarted by institutional and individual racism. Other sensitive family issues are also discussed in the text. Consider ways in which you might discuss these issues and provide opportunities for your student to share their reactions and thoughts. Or reach out to your student's educator for additional support.

### Core texts your student will read:

- "Sucker" by Carson McCullers
- *A Raisin in the Sun* by Lorraine Hansberry
- "Harlem" by Langston Hughes
- Excerpt from *To Be Young, Gifted and Black: An Informal Autobiography* by Lorraine Hansberry

### What my student will do/learn:

- Students read and discuss the character dynamics and how they change in the short story "Sucker."
- Students perform scenes from the play *A Raisin in the Sun* and analyze film performances to support their analysis of text details and characterization.
- Students gain a deeper knowledge of the historical and social context of *A Raisin in the Sun* by examining an excerpt from Hansberry's memoir and engaging in an immersive exploration of mid-twentieth century Chicago with the specially-designed *Quest: Black, White and Blues in Chicago*. Students discuss the ways in which the characters react to conflict and challenges—including racism. They compare Lorraine Hansberry's fictional family's responses to Langston Hughes's poem "Harlem" and to the challenges faced by Lorraine Hansberry's real family, described in an excerpt from Hansberry's memoir, *To Be Young, Gifted and Black*.

- Students continue to use key classroom routines, including the sharing routine, during which classmates respond to shared writing by noting one effective way the writer used details or evidence.
- Students continue to write in response to prompts 2–3 times weekly, and practice analytic writing in response to text by developing a controlling idea or claim and providing support with details or evidence.
- Students write an end-of-unit essay responding to the following prompt: Choose to write about either Walter or Mama. Describe one way your character changes from the beginning to the end of the play.

**Here are some conversation starters that you can use during this unit to promote discussion and encourage continued learning with your student.**

1. How would you describe the relationship between Pete and Sucker? Does their relationship change at all? How do Pete’s reactions compare to real teenagers you know?
2. What obstacles do the characters in *A Raisin in the Sun* encounter as they pursue the things they want? How do they react? How do their experiences relate to what you or people you know have experienced?
3. How do Langston Hughes’s “Harlem” and the excerpt from Lorraine Hansberry’s memoir relate to *A Raisin in the Sun*? What themes (or big ideas) are evident in these texts? How are those themes relevant in today’s world?
4. Can you share a piece of writing with me in which you use pieces of evidence from the text to support your answer? (Provide feedback to your student by finding something in their writing that you can respond to as a reader. For example, “I like how you focus on Beneatha saying “Un-huh” to Mr. Lindner when he introduces himself (Act II, Scene Three, 58). You’re right—it shows how Beneatha is the first to recognize that Mr. Lindner is not really welcoming the Younger family to the neighborhood.”)
5. How have the characters in *A Raisin in the Sun* changed by the end of the play?