

# ***Raisin***

**Book by Robert Nemiroff and Charlotte Zaltzberg  
Based on Lorraine Hansberry's "A Raisin in the Sun"**

## **Court Theatre**

Directed by Charles Newell  
September 14 - October 22, 2006

## Study Guide

Production Dramaturg: Jocelyn Prince

Dear Educators:

Thank you for your participation in Court Theatre's production of *Raisin*. We look forward to seeing you and your class at your scheduled performance.

We hope you find this study guide helpful to you and your students. The play synopsis is intended for your use. You are not obliged to provide it to your students before the play if you think it will take away from their experience.

The chapters on the Great Migration, term definitions, Lorraine Hansberry's biography and the pre-show questions are basic preparation materials for students to study before viewing the play.

The plot outline worksheet can be a useful assignment to illustrate dramatic structure, if your students are familiar with the terms.

Information on the world of the 1950s, poems, Integration and Segregation Chronology, information on Lee v. Hansberry, images and post-show questions are supplementary materials to be discussed or copied and handed out to your students as time allows.

Enjoy the show!

Sincerely,

Court Theatre Artistic Staff

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## **“Raisin”- Synopsis**

This play tells the story of a working-class black family's struggle to gain middle-class acceptance. When the play opens, Mama, the sixty-year-old mother of the family, is waiting for a \$10,000 insurance check from the death of her husband, and the drama will focus primarily on how the \$10,000 should be spent.

The son, Walter Lee Younger, is so desperate to be a better provider for his growing family that he wants to invest the entire sum in a liquor store with two of his friends. Mama objects mainly for ethical reasons; she is vehemently opposed to the idea of selling liquor. Minor conflicts erupt over their disagreements.

When Mama decides to use part of the money as a down payment on a house in a white neighborhood, her conflict with Walter escalates and causes her deep anguish. In an attempt to make things right between herself and her son, Mama entrusts Walter Lee with the rest of the money. He immediately invests it secretly in his liquor store scheme, believing that he will perhaps quadruple his initial investment.

One of Walter Lee's prospective business partners, however, runs off with the money, a loss that tests the spiritual and psychological mettle of each family member. After much wavering and vacillating, the Youngers decide to continue with their plans to move--in spite of their financial reversals and in spite of their having been warned by a weak representative of the white neighborhood that blacks are not welcome.

# Great Migration

Chicago's African American population increased dramatically between 1890 and 1920, when many African Americans moved north to find better jobs and to flee widespread racial violence. By 1910 the black population in Chicago had reached 40,000 among 2 million inhabitants; by 1920 it was 80,000, and a second, smaller black neighborhood had developed on the West Side. The community developed its own institutions, including a hospital, a training school for nurses, lodges, a bank, a YMCA settlement house, and branches of the National Negro Business League, the NAACP, and the Federated Women's Clubs. In 1905 Robert Abbott founded the *Chicago Defender* newspaper.

The Great Migration's impact on cultural life in Chicago is most evident in the southern influence on the Chicago Renaissance of the 1930s and 1940s, as well as blues music, cuisine, churches, and the numerous family and community associations that link Chicago with its southern hinterland—especially Mississippi.

In the 1940s and 1950s, blacks had once again migrated in enormous numbers from the South. The South Side community tried to expand but met with both legal and violent opposition. The Great Migration established the foundation of Chicago's African American industrial working class. Despite the tensions between newcomers and “old settlers,” related to differences in age, region of origin, and class, the Great Migration established the foundation for black political power, business enterprise, and union activism.

# World of the 1950s

Population: 151,684,000 (U.S. Dept. of Commerce, Bureau of the Census)

Unemployed: 3,288,000

Life expectancy: Women 71.1, men 65.6

Car Sales: 6,665,800

Average Salary: \$2,992

Labor Force male/female: 5/2

Cost of a loaf of bread: \$0.14

Bomb shelter plans, like the government pamphlet *You Can Survive*, become widely available

Music: When the 1950's are mentioned, the first type of music to come to most people's minds is rock 'n roll . Developed from a blend of Southern blues and gospel music with an added strong back beat, this type of music was popular with teenagers who were trying to break out of the mainstream conservative American middle class mold. Popular artists such as Bill Haley, Elvis Presley, and Jerry Lee Lewis were promoted on radio by just as popular disc-jockeys (DJ's) like Alan Freed and the Big Bopper. Music in the Fifties was more than just rock 'n roll. Crooners like Nat King Cole, Frank Sinatra, Perry Como and Dinah Shore were all popular.

Popular Songs: "A Bushel and A Peck," "Kisses Sweeter Than Wine," "I Saw Mommy Kissing Santa Claus," "Rock Around the Clock," "Whatever Lola Wants," "Hound Dog," "Love Letters in the Sand," "The Purple People Eater," "He's Got the Whole World in His Hands," "High Hopes"

## Literature/Theater:

Gwendolyn Brooks: "Annie Allen," Pulitzer Prize for poetry (1950)

Carl Sandburg: "Complete Poems," Pulitzer Prize (1951)

Ralph Ellison: "The Invisible Man" (1952)

Samuel Beckett: "Waiting for Godot" (1952)

Arthur Miller: "The Crucible" (1953)

Nobel Prize for Literature: Ernest Hemingway (1954)

Charles A. Lindbergh: "The Spirit of St. Louis," Pulitzer Prize for biography (1954)

Tennessee Williams: "Cat on a Hot Tin Roof," Pulitzer Prize drama (1955)

Goodrich and Hackett: "The Diary of Anne Frank," Pulitzer Prize drama (1956)

Jack Kerouac: "On the Road" (1957)  
Dr. Seuss: "The Cat in the Hat" (1957)  
Lorraine Hansberry: "A Raisin in the Sun" (1958)  
John Updike: "Poorhouse Fair" (1959)

Major Events:

- Senator Joseph McCarthy advises President Truman that State Department is riddled with Communists and Communist sympathizers (1950)
- Riots in Johannesburg against apartheid (1950)
- 1.5 million TV sets in U.S. (one year later approx. 15 million) (1950)
- Julius and Ethel Rosenberg are sentenced to death for espionage against the U.S. (1951)
- Color television is first introduced (in U.S.) (1951)
- Dwight Eisenhower resigns as Supreme Commander in Europe; elected President of the U.S. (1952)
- Israel and Germany agree on restitution for damages done to Jews by the Nazis (1952)
- Korean armistice signed at Panmunjom July 27; U.S. and South Korea sign mutual defense treaty (1953)
- U.S. Supreme Court rules that segregation by color in public schools is a violation of the 14<sup>th</sup> Amendment to the Constitution (1954)
- Sugar Ray Robinson wins world boxing championship from Carl "Bobo" Olson (1955)
- Mary McLeod Bethune, American educator and civil rights leader dies (1955)
- Sudan proclaimed independent democratic republic (1956)
- “Rock and Roll” dance is in vogue (1956)
- Dwight Eisenhower reelected President of the U.S. (1956)
- Tidal wave follows hurricane Audrey into coasts of Texas and Louisiana, leaving 530 dead and missing (1957)
- “Beat” and “beatnik” take hold as new words to describe the “Beat Generation” first treated in Kerouac’s “On the Road” (1957)
- Alaska becomes 49<sup>th</sup> state of the U.S. (1958)
- Tension grows in the U.S. as desegregation of schools is attempted in the South; Governor Orval Faubus of Arkansas defies Supreme Court by closing schools in Little Rock, reopening them as private, segregated schools (1958)
- U.S. establishes National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) to administer scientific exploration of space (1958)
- Belgium grants reforms in Congo (1959)

- Hawaii becomes 50<sup>th</sup> state of the U.S. (1959)
- Cuban president Batista flees to the Dominican Republic; Fidel Castro becomes Premier of Cuba; expropriates U.S.- owned sugar mills (1959)

What cost **\$.50** in 1955 would cost **\$3.44** in 2005.

Also, if you were to buy exactly the same products in 2005 and 1955, they would cost you **\$.50** and **\$0.07** respectively.

What cost **\$10000** in 1955 would cost **\$68704.15** in 2005.

Also, if you were to buy exactly the same products in 2005 and 1955, they would cost you **\$10000** and **\$1455.52** respectively.

**Average Annual Salary: \$2,992**



## Integration and Segregation in the United States: Chronology

1861-65	Civil War years.
1866	Ku Klux Klan established in Tennessee.
1870	Passage of Fifteenth Amendment to U.S. Constitution prohibiting racial discrimination in voting.
1882	Chinese Exclusionary Act banning Chinese immigration to the United States for ten years.
1896	<i>Plessy v. Ferguson</i> Supreme Court decision permitting "separate but equal" public racial facilities.
1907	Supreme Court declares that railroads have the right to segregate passengers.
1909	National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) founded.
1911	National Urban League founded.
1919	Race riots in Chicago.
1924	Immigration Act establishing quotas based on national origin.
1927	Urban League organizes boycott of stores refusing to hire blacks.
1943	Race riots in Detroit.
1946	Supreme Court declares that segregation on buses is unconstitutional.
1947	Jackie Robinson becomes first African American to play major league baseball.
1948	President Truman issues executive order integrating armed forces.
1949	Supreme Court rules that local "covenants" enforcing segregated neighborhoods are unconstitutional. National Housing Act addressing substandard housing.
1954	<i>Brown v. Board of Education</i> Supreme Court ruling that "separate but equal" doctrine regarding school segregation is unconstitutional.
1955	Bus boycott in Montgomery, Alabama.
1957	School desegregation crisis in Little Rock, Arkansas.
1960	"Sit-ins" begin at Woolworth's in Greensboro, North Carolina.
1961	"Freedom Riders" attempt to force integration in Alabama.
1962	African American student James Meridith is denied admission to the University of Mississippi, resulting in contempt charges against the governor of Mississippi.

## Integration and Segregation in the United States: Chronology

1963	<p>George Wallace's "school house stand" attempting to block integration of the University of Alabama.</p> <p>Martin Luther King Jr. arrested in Birmingham, Alabama, while leading civil rights demonstrations.</p> <p>March on Washington, D.C., demonstrating for civil rights.</p> <p>Medgar Evers assassinated.</p>
1964	<p>Twenty-Fourth Amendment to the Constitution ratified, abolishing the poll tax.</p> <p>Martin Luther King, Jr. wins the Nobel Peace Prize.</p> <p>Race riots in Harlem.</p>
1965	<p>Malcolm X assassinated.</p> <p>Martin Luther King Jr. leads march from Selma to Montgomery, Alabama.</p> <p>Race riots in Watts, Los Angeles.</p> <p>Immigration law abolishes quota system.</p> <p>Voting Rights Bill passed.</p>
1967	<p>Black Power conference held in Newark, New Jersey.</p> <p>Race riots in Cleveland, Newark, and Detroit.</p>
1968	<p>Civil Rights Act of 1968 guaranteeing fair treatment in housing.</p> <p>Martin Luther King Jr. assassinated.</p>

# **Definition of Terms**

## **Ghetto**

“Ghetto” is a term with a long history, originally referring to Jewish enclaves within European cities, which were physically separated from surrounding areas, but whose economic institutions often played an important role in the life of the greater city. In American cities, including Chicago, the changing dynamics of the process known as ghettoization have paralleled shifts in racial-ethnic composition and underscored the effects of major public policy breakdowns.

In the early twentieth century, the predominantly Eastern European Jewish Maxwell Street area on the Near West Side, through the research of sociologist Louis Wirth, earned the appellation of “the ghetto.” Unlike European ghettos, this community of indigenously controlled cultural institutions and businesses was in no explicitly physical or legal fashion segregated from the remainder of Chicago. By the 1920s, however, on the city's South Side, a cluster of adjoining neighborhoods were congealing into a Black Belt, whose long-standing character would give a new meaning to the term “ghetto.”

The original South Side Black Belt formed in response to external pressures, including discriminatory real-estate practices and the threat of violence in adjoining white neighborhoods. By the 1950s, the Chicago Housing Authority's (CHA) project-siting practices further contributed to the concentration of African Americans in the old South Side Black Belt and in a second band of neighborhoods on the city's West Side.

## **Black Belt**

From the turn of the twentieth century until after World War II, the term “Black Belt” was commonly used to identify the predominately African American community on Chicago's South Side. Originally a narrow corridor extending from 22nd to 31st Streets along State Street, Chicago's South Side African American community expanded over the century until it stretched from 39th to 95th streets, the Dan Ryan Expressway to Lake Michigan.

## **Restrictive Covenants**

Racially restrictive covenants, in particular, are contractual agreements among property owners that prohibit the purchase, lease, or occupation of their premises by a particular group of people, usually African Americans.

## **Redlining**

Redlining is the practice of arbitrarily denying or limiting financial services to specific neighborhoods, generally because its residents are people of color or are poor. Like other forms of discrimination, redlining had pernicious and damaging effects. Without bank loans and insurance, redlined areas lacked the capital essential for investment and redevelopment. As a result, after World War II, suburban areas received preference for residential investment at the expense of poor and minority neighborhoods in cities like Chicago. The relative lack of investment in new housing, rehabilitation, and home improvement contributed significantly to the decline of older urban neighborhoods and compounded Chicago's decline in relation to its suburbs.

## **Kitchenettes**

The “kitchenette” initially described a newly constructed small apartment in Chicago, first appearing around 1916 in Uptown, at a time when apartment construction in the city was increasing dramatically. It featured “Pullman kitchens” and “Murphy in-a-door beds” to conserve space, and connoted efficiency and modernity.

# **A Dream Deffered**

## **poem by Langston Hughes**

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 and sugar over--  
like a syrupy sweet?

Maybe it just sags

like a heavy load.

Or does it explode?

# **Kitchenette Building**

## **poem by Gwendolyn Brooks**

We are things of dry hours and the involuntary plan,  
Grayed in, and gray. "Dream" mate, a giddy sound, not strong  
Like "rent", "feeding a wife", "satisfying a man".

But could a dream sent up through onion fumes  
Its white and violet, fight with fried potatoes  
And yesterday's garbage ripening in the hall,  
Flutter, or sing an aria down these rooms,

Even if we were willing to let it in,  
Had time to warm it, keep it very clean,  
Anticipate a message, let it begin?

We wonder. But not well! not for a minute!  
Since Number Five is out of the bathroom now,  
We think of lukewarm water, hope to get in it.

# Lee v. Hansberry

*Hansberry v. Lee*, 311 U.S. 32 (1940) is a famous case now usually known in Civil Procedure for teaching that *res judicata* may not bind a subsequent plaintiff who had no opportunity to be represented in the earlier civil action. The facts of the case dealt with a racially restrictive covenant amongst members of a class which would have called for excluding Carl Hansberry, the father of famous author Lorraine Hansberry, merely because people both believed in the biologically discredited theory of race and according to that theory, that he was black. The defendants asserted that since Hansberry was a class member, he should be bound by the prior decision. Justice Harlan Fiske Stone held that since he didn't have an opportunity to be heard, enforcing that racial covenant would deny him his due process rights guaranteed by the Fourteenth Amendment.

Later, the type of real property restriction, racially restrictive covenants, was held by *Shelley v. Kraemer*, 334 U.S. 1 (1948) to be state action because the plaintiffs seeking to enforce such a covenant was invoking the machinery of the state.

In June of 1937, white residents of the Woodlawn neighborhood (60<sup>th</sup> to 67<sup>th</sup> north-south, and Lake Michigan to what is now MLK Dr (then South Park Ave) east-west), represented by lawyers of the Woodlawn Property Owner's Association filed suit against Carl Hansberry and his wife Nannie (their daughter Lorraine was at this time 7 years old) who had purchased property at 6140 S. Rhodes Ave. The Hansberrys had previously been forced to vacate a property at 549 E 60<sup>th</sup> St. due to the influence of racially restrictive covenant.

*Lee v. Hansberry* was first ruled in Circuit Court in favor of the Plaintiffs. The Hansberrys and their co-dependents appealed a series of lower court rulings and finally landed before the Supreme Court in November, 1940. The Supreme Court decided in favor of the Hansberrys, opening up more than 300 properties in the Woodlawn neighborhood to African-American inhabitants. However, the Court did not at this time strike down racially restrictive covenants as racist and unconstitutional, but rather found that *in this particular case* their use had been fraudulent.

**Excerpt from the Racial Restrictive Covenant of the Washington Park Subdivision in the City of Chicago:**

“The restriction that no part of said premises shall in any manner be used or occupied directly or indirectly by any negro or negroes, provided that this restriction shall not prevent the occupation, during the period of their employment as janitors’ or Chauffeurs’ quarters in the basement or in a barn or garage in the rear, or of servants’ quarters by negro janitors, employed as such for service in and about the chauffeurs or house servants, respectively, actually employed as such for service in and about the premises by the rightful owner or occupant of said premises.”

“The iron band of restrictive covenants which has checked the eastward movement of the Race on Chicago’s South Side was pierced at one point by a decision handed down by the United States Supreme Court Tuesday. The ruling upheld the contention of Carl Hansberry, prominent South Side realtor, and others, that the property owners agreements barring Negroes from residing in an area bounded by Sixtieth and Sixty-third streets, South Parkway and Cottage Grove avenue, are non-existent. The decision makes available to Negroes approximately 300 additional parcels of property.”  
--*The Chicago Defender*, Saturday, November 16, 1940





## **Biography of Lorraine Hansberry**

*I'm not talking about Black racism. Let's keep in mind what we're talking about. We're talking about oppressed peoples who are saying that they must assert themselves in the world...*

*Let's not equalize the oppressed with the oppressor and saying that when people stand up and say that we don't want any more of this that they are not talking about a new kind of racism. My position is that we have a great deal to be angry about, furious about. You know it's 1959 and they are still lynching [killing] Negroes in America. And I feel, as our African friends do, that we need all ideologies which point toward the total liberation of the African peoples all over the world.*

*--Lorraine Hansberry*

During the 1950s and until her untimely death in 1965, Lorraine Hansberry was a prominent voice crying for the “total liberation of African peoples all over the world,” especially the liberation of African-Americans in their protracted struggle for freedom and equality.

Hansberry's influence as an artist and activist is best understood by examining the social, political, and historic contexts through which she sought to convey the experiences of oppressed people who were determined to "assert themselves in the world." Malcolm X described this period as "a time when there's a revolution going on, a worldwide revolution." Hansberry herself corroborated Malcolm's views by saying, For me this is one of the most affirmative periods in history. I am very pleased that those peoples in the world whom I feel closest to, the colonial peoples, the African people, the Asian peoples, are in an insurgent mood and are in the process of transforming the world and I think for the better. I can't quite understand pessimism at this moment unless of course one is wedded to things that are dying out which should die out like colonialism, like racism."

It was in this global context of change that Hansberry's controversial play, *A Raisin in the Sun* (1959), signaled a new era for the role of the black artist in the American civil rights struggle, a post-*Brown v. Board of Education* period in which there was a vortex of direct actions and protests by blacks against racism and discrimination in American life. This was also a time that saw the emergence of diverse civil rights organizations and leaders, often with different and competitive ideologies, tactics, and agendas for black liberation throughout the world. Examples of these organizations and individuals are the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) and Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.; The Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) and Stokely Carmichael, Rap Brown, Malcolm X and others.

Hansberry's listing recognizes the impact of her ideals and work, especially in the play *A Raisin in the Sun*, in conveying to black and white society the singlemindedness and persistence of blacks to be- to overcome white racism and oppression.

Measures of the impact of *A Raisin in the Sun* go beyond it being the first play on Broadway by a black female playwright. One must also mention the play's lengthy run of 538 performances which indicated its acceptance by white society, the patrons of Broadway theater; Hansberry's New York Drama Critics Circle Award for Best Play of the Year in 1959; and the opportunities provided for black artists, like Sidney Poitier, Ruby Dee, Lou Gossett, and black director, Lloyd Richards, and others to display their considerable talents on Broadway. At the same time, *A Raisin in the Sun*

opened the doors for other blacks to the economic potential of a multibillion dollar entertainment complex (Broadway and Off-Broadway), which would witness an unprecedented rise in black theatre during the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s.

Lorraine Vivian Hansberry was born on May 19, 1930 in Chicago, to Carl, a successful real estate broker, and Nannie, a schoolteacher. Her maternal grandparents were slaves. Both her parents were active politically, her mother as a ward committeeperson and her father as a member of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and the Urban League, as a United States marshal, and an unsuccessful candidate for the United States Congress.

Hansberry attended public elementary schools on the southeast side of Chicago. While in the third grade, her family moved into an all-white neighborhood on the South Side of Chicago, where they were taunted, harassed, and forced to leave the neighborhood by a lower court ruling that upheld restrictive housing covenants in Chicago, which barred blacks from moving into white areas. Her father challenged this ruling all the way to the Supreme Court and, in 1940, the Court, in *Hansberry v. Lee*, struck down restrictive covenants. This struggle against discrimination in housing and other areas would later become the theme of *A Raisin in the Sun* and other works.

Hansberry graduated from Englewood High School in Chicago in 1948- also the alma mater of Gwendolyn Brooks. She then attended the University of Wisconsin, where she developed her interests in theatre. Leaving Wisconsin after two years, she studies painting at several schools, including the Art Institute of Chicago.

In 1950, she moved to New York City, studying briefly at the New School for Social Research. During that year, she also met Paul Robeson and started working as a reporter for his newspaper, *Freedom*, becoming an associate editor in 1952. During her association with Robeson and others, like W.E.B. Dubois and her uncle, renowned Africanist historian William Leo Hansberry, she developed a global view of the struggle of all oppressed peoples- black and nonblack.

In 1953, she married Robert Nemiroff, a writer, composer, and Communist activist. By this time Hansberry had started writing essays and plays. In

1957, inspired by her childhood experiences with racism and discrimination, she wrote the first version of *A Raisin in the Sun*. The title was adapted from a line of Langston Hughes' famous poem, "Harlem," in which he prophesied the dire consequences of "a dream deferred," drying up "like a raisin in the sun" and festering and exploding like the dynamite of "frustrated hopes and pent-up folk consciousness." Richard Wright and others saw and felt that frustration during the four decades preceding the Brown v. Board of Education era.

After successful runs of *A Raisin in the Sun* in New Haven, Philadelphia and Chicago, it opened on Broadway at the Ethel Barrymore Theatre on March 11, 1959, the first significant black play on Broadway since Langston Hughes' *Mulatto* in 1938. Hansberry saw *A Raisin in the Sun* as unambiguously portraying the "fact of racial oppression...The reason these people are in the ghetto in America is because they are Negroes."

Other significant works by Hansberry illuminating the black struggle against racial oppression are *The Movement: A Documentary of a Struggle for Racial Equality in the USA* (1964); *The Sign in Sidney Brustein's Window* (1965); *To Be Young, Gifted, and Black: Lorraine Hansberry in Her Own Words* [adapted by Nemiroff, 1969]; and *Les Blancs: The Collected Last Plays of Lorraine Hansberry* (edited by Nemiroff, 1972).

Lorraine Hansberry died of cancer on January 12, 1965, in New York City. Another measure of her impact on African-Americans can be seen by the attendance of Paul Robeson, Ossie Davis and Malcolm X among the hundreds of mourners at her funeral on January 16, 1965, at Church of the Master on 122<sup>nd</sup> Street in Harlem, nearly one month before the assassination of Malcolm X at the Audubon Ballroom in Harlem.

# **“Raisin” – Plot Outline**

Student Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Use the traditional pyramidal structure to map the important parts of the plot.

1. Exposition/Situation

2. Rising Action

3. Complication

4. Climax

5. Falling Action

6. Resolution

### **Pre-Show Questions**

- 1) Where and when is the play set?
- 2) Does the set look realistic or abstract? Can you tell the characters' standard of living based on the set? How does the set incorporate the audience members?
- 3) How is music used in the play?
- 4) What is the significance of the play being set in the 1950s?

### **Post-Show Questions**

- 1) What is the significance of the play's title?
- 2) How does a "dream deferred" shape the lives of the characters? Which dreams in the play are individual? Shared? Are any of the characters' dreams realized?
- 3) How does Walter Lee set up the direction of the play's plot; what goal does he reference or allude to that will create a struggle for him throughout the course of the play?
- 4) What does Beneatha mean when she says she is looking for her identity? Why does she like Asagai?
- 5) What is Mama's favorite item in the apartment?
- 6) Who is often mentioned, but never appears as a character in the play?
- 7) What does Travis want to be when he grows up?
- 8) Is Ruth happy about her new pregnancy? Why or why not?

### **Suggested Assignments**

- 1) Research the history of your city or neighborhood, focusing on how its ethnic or racial composition has (or has not) shifted. Choose a specific time period to examine, such as the last ten, twenty, or fifty years.
- 2) Choose one African nation and research its history. Focus on a particular time period, for example, the era before colonialization, the late nineteenth century or the 1960s.
- 3) Read a biography and write an essay about the life of a prominent individual in the civil rights movement. Examples include W.E.B. Dubois, Marcus Garvey, Booker T. Washington, Rosa Parks, Martin Luther King, Malcolm X, Medgar Evers, and Ida B. Wells.
- 4) Write a poem in which you characterize a place with which you are familiar.
- 5) Define "being a man" according to Walter, Mama and Asagai.
- 6) Write a paper offering a solution to a particular racial conflict in your school or community.



### **Crowded Quarters**

**The housing crunch in Northern cities, along with the segregation and discrimination facing African Americans attempting to find places to live, led to extremely crowded conditions, such as those pictured in this Chicago residence in 1941.**



### **Sharing Space**

**With overcrowding at its height, families doubled up and strangers had to share bathrooms and kitchens. The "kitchenette apartment" was characteristic of the period, as large buildings were carved up into several one-room apartments.**





### **Racist Policies**

**One of the most influential forces in maintaining housing segregation in Northern cities was the federal government. The policies of agencies such as the Home Owners' Loan Corporation and the Federal Housing Administration furthered racial segregation. Mapping and appraisal systems developed by these agencies favored the growth of white, suburban housing developments and created obstacles for African Americans who wished to obtain home loans. They were forced to remain in poor, substandard neighborhoods.**



### **Changing Tenants in Chicago**

**Rigid segregation meant that whole buildings or neighborhoods would "change" as African Americans moved in. Signs such as this one meant that the building was being vacated by white tenants and was going to be rented to African Americans exclusively.**



### **White Flight**

**"Blockbusting" brokers would sell property to an African American in an all-white neighborhood - particularly in areas that were near, and thus "threatened" by, black neighborhoods. The brokers would then spread the news that African Americans were moving in, and offer their services to alarmed whites who wanted to move out. These blockbusting speculators made huge profits by buying the homes of panicking whites at below-market prices and selling them to African Americans, who had few options and were willing to pay high prices for decent housing. The federal administration subsidized whites' move to the suburbs with low-interest mortgages, but blacks were excluded. They were relegated to the inner-city neighborhoods that the white population had fled.**



### **An Unfriendly Welcome**

**The Sojourner Truth project was one of two black enclaves that grew within the predominantly white, blue-collar Seven Mile-Fenelon neighborhood. Whites tried to prevent African-American tenants from moving into the housing project. They posted this sign opposite its entrance.**



### **Restrictive Covenants**

**In the 1948 *Shelley v. Kraemer* decision, the United States Supreme Court found the use of racially restrictive covenants illegal. They were clauses in deeds for real estate sales that were created to preserve the architectural or social homogeneity of a neighborhood. Restrictive covenants could limit anything from hanging laundry outside to the sale or rental of homes to nonwhites. These racial restrictions were ubiquitous in many Northern cities. In 1941, a half-mile-long concrete wall was erected to separate an African-American neighborhood in Detroit from the white section. In that city, by 1947 over 80 percent of property outside of the inner city had racially restrictive stipulations.**



### **Bright Lights, Big City**

Aside from the appeal of employment opportunities, African Americans were also drawn to the cultural and commercial entertainment possibilities promised by city life.



### **Urban Nightlife**

**Segregated residential patterns in Northern cities spawned flourishing institutions in black neighborhoods, including a thriving nightlife. Pictured is the bar at Palm Tavern on 47th Street in Chicago.**



### **Storefront Church**

**Growing black populations in Northern cities in the 1940s - along with the customary practices of segregation in public facilities - created the demand for institutions willing to provide services for African Americans. As they had been in the South, churches were the cornerstones of the migrants' lives.**