

Theme: American Dream – Lorraine Hansberry's *Raisin in the Sun*

Text: Extract from Act III (p 73, 1 11 ff)

 BENEATHA [...] All your talk and dreams about Africa and Independence. Independence and then what? What about all the crooks and petty thieves and just plain idiots who will come into power to steal and plunder the same as before — only now they will be black and do it in the name of the new Independence — You cannot answer that.

5 ASAGAI (Shouting over her) I live answer! (Pause)

In my village at home it is the exceptional man who can even read a newspaper ... or who ever sees a book at all. I will go home and much of what I will have to say will seem strange to the people of my village ... But I will teach and work and things will happen, slowly and swiftly. At times it will seem that nothing changes at all ... and then again ... the sudden dramatic events which make history leap into the future. And then quiet again. Retrogression

10 even. Guns, murder, revolution. And I even will have moments when I wonder if the quiet was not better than all that death and hatred. But I will look about my village at the illiteracy and disease and ignorance and I will not wonder long. And perhaps ... perhaps I will be a great man ... I mean perhaps I will hold on to the substance of truth and find my way always with the right course ... and perhaps for it I will be butchered in my bed some night by the servants of empire ...

15 BENEATHA The martyr! (260)

Assignments

1) In your own words, summarize the controversy surrounding Asagai's dream. [Contents]

2) Pick another passage from the drama that deals with a dream that provokes controversy. Work closely on that alternative passage to point out parallels and differences to the present excerpt. [Analysis]

3) Put the conflicts that you have presented in assignments 1 and 2 into the larger context of American history. Include Langston Hughes' poem *What happens to a dream deferred?* in your considerations. [Evaluation]

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