

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

## A Raisin in the Sun - Setting the Stage

If you've ever gone to see a play here at Franklin, or anywhere else, then you are familiar with what a set looks like. It is "dressed" with furniture, curtains, and other props that the actors use. What you see when attending a play is a combination of the director's vision and the playwright's instructions.

Today, I am hiring you to design a set for a production of Lorraine Hansberry's play *A Raisin in the Sun*. To guide your creativity, read the stage directions from the opening of Act One:

*The Younger living room would be a comfortable and well-ordered room if it were not for a number of indestructible contradictions to this state of being. Its furnishings are typical and undistinguished and their primary feature now is that they have clearly had to accommodate the living of too many people for too many years—and they are tired. Still, we can see that at some time, a time probably no longer remembered by the family (except perhaps for Mama), the furnishings of this room were actually selected with care and love and even hope—and brought to this apartment and arranged with taste and pride.*

*That was a long time ago. Now the once loved pattern of the couch upholstery has to fight to show itself from under acres of crocheted doilies and couch covers which have themselves finally come to be more important than the upholstery. And here a table or chair has been moved to disguise the worn places in the carpet; but the carpet has fought back by showing its weariness, with depressing uniformity, elsewhere on its surface.*

*Weariness has, in fact, won in this room. Everything has been polished, washed, sat on, used, scrubbed too often. All pretenses but living itself have long since vanished from the very atmosphere of this room.*

*Moreover, a section of this room, for it is not really a room unto itself, thought the landlord's lease would make it seem so, slopes backward to provide a small kitchen area, where the family prepares the meals that are eaten in the living room proper, which must also serve as dining room. The single window that has been provided for these "two" rooms is located in this kitchen area. The sole natural light the family may enjoy in the course of a day is only that which fights its way through this little window.*

*At left, a door leads to a bedroom which is shared by Mama and her daughter, Beneatha. At right, opposite, is a second room (which in the beginning of the life of this apartment was probably a breakfast room) which serves as a bedroom for Walter and his wife, Ruth.*

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### Step One:

Working with a partner, create a detailed visual representation of the Younger family apartment. Remember that with plays there are three solid walls, and that the fourth wall is "invisible;" that's where the audience sits. Keeping this in mind, make sure that as the actors move about the set, the audience can always see the action (for example, sofas and chairs should face the audience.) Include as much detail as you can based on Hansberry's precise stage directions. Be accurate and use COLOR. If you want to cut and paste, go for it.

### Step Two:

Working independently, write a **detailed analysis** explaining what the description of the room reveals about the family who lives here. What do the Youngers value? What is their life like? Be sure to *identify* words and phrases in the stage directions that lead you to these conclusions.

Example: Even though the Youngers live in a small, three-room apartment, they have not given up on themselves; the fact their "furnishings... were selected with care and love... and arranged with tast and pride" suggests that they live with as much dignity as their poverty allows.

**Challenge:** Address how the personification of the furnishings contributes to our initial impression of the family who lives here. Consider *why* Hansberry personifies these objects. What does that *do*?

**Staple** this cover sheet to your analysis; paperclip your analysis and your partner's to the drawing.

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### Assessment - 20 points:

To earn an A:

- ❑ Drawing is accurate, detailed, colored, and easy to understand
- ❑ Analysis makes strong and perceptive assertions about the Youngers; well supported by specific details

To earn a B:

- ❑ Drawing is generally correct and includes detail and color
- ❑ Analysis makes good assertions about Youngers; uses detail to support ideas

To earn a C:

- ❑ Drawing is mostly correct and has some detail and color; may have forgotten about the "invisible" wall or misses some of the details
- ❑ Analysis makes general conclusions about the Youngers; uses some detail

To earn a D:

- ❑ Drawing has many inconsistencies with the stage directions; no color
- ❑ Analysis either makes unsupported generalizations and stereotypes about the Youngers or only describes the room itself