



## 7B: Character & Conflict

### Texts

“Sucker” by Carson McCullers

*A Raisin in the Sun* by Lorraine Hansberry

“Harlem” by Langston Hughes

Excerpts from *To Be Young, Gifted and Black* by Lorraine Hansberry

### Introduction to the Texts

In the short story “Sucker” by Carson McCullers, Sucker and Pete are cousins who grow up in the same house, sharing a bedroom. Pete is 16 and Sucker is 12. Pete mostly ignores Sucker. He spends much of his time thinking about a girl named Maybelle. The two boys’ feelings toward each other change during the story.

In Lorraine Hansberry’s play *A Raisin in the Sun*, the Youngers are a black family in Chicago in the mid-1950s. The father has just died. The rest of the family argue about how to spend money from his life insurance. Life insurance provides money to a person’s family after that person dies. The mother wants to buy a house in a mostly white neighborhood where black people are not welcome. Her son, Walter, wants to use the money to start a business. Using money for a business is called an investment.

In the excerpt from *To Be Young, Gifted and Black* by Lorraine Hansberry, the author describes her own family’s difficulties as the only black residents in a mostly white neighborhood. Hansberry used some of these experiences to help her write *A Raisin in the Sun*.

In the poem “Harlem” by Langston Hughes, the speaker discusses a “dream deferred.” The dream represents the hopes and goals of black people in American society. The word “deferred” means delayed, or happening later.

### Background and Context

#### Maybelle and the Queen of Sheba

In “Sucker,” Pete thinks that Maybelle is very proud and like the Queen of Sheba, the ruler of a wealthy place in the Middle East thousands of years ago. Pete’s changing feelings about Maybelle affect the way he behaves toward Sucker.

#### Racial Discrimination

The other three selections in this unit deal with racial discrimination. Racial discrimination is unfair treatment of people because of their race or skin color. In *A Raisin in the Sun*, Mr. Lindner, a white man, tells the Younger

family that bad things will happen to them if they move into his neighborhood. He and his white neighbors offer the Youngers money not to move into the house they have bought in his neighborhood.

Walter Younger and his sister, Beneatha, argue about assimilation. The word “assimilation” means becoming part of a culture and society. Walter wants to be successful within the mainstream culture of the United States. Beneatha is interested in having parts of African heritage in her life.

In *To Be Young, Gifted and Black*, Lorraine Hansberry discusses housing discrimination. Before the 1960s, white people could create covenants that prevented nonwhite people from moving into white neighborhoods. A covenant is a type of communal written agreement.

**Word Count:** 479

**Langston Hughes and the Harlem Renaissance**

Langston Hughes spent many years living in Harlem, a primarily black neighborhood in New York City. Hughes was a part of the Harlem Renaissance, a time of great creativity by black artists, writers, and thinkers in Harlem in the 1920s.

**Keywords**

Queen of Sheba insurance	investment assimilation	deferred covenant
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**Sources**

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