

For several of Hansberry's characters, money is a promise of salvation, a gift to be stored up and fought for whenever possible. Almost every character shows an occasional lust for money. Accepting the offer from the Clybourne Welcoming Committee would mean capitulating to a racist demand: The whites have offered the money to the Youngers because the whites do not want to live in an interracial community. Money that assists Walter in his liquor store plans could instead be invested in Beneatha's education or a house for Travis—less lucrative ideals that Mama nonetheless clearly prefers to Walter's dream. If Mama doesn't give Travis the fifty cents he asks for, she denies him the chance to participate in a classroom activity, furthering his education and bolstering his pride. By settling for the wealthy George, Beneatha would sacrifice her intellectual passion and spend the rest of her life with a man who casually admits to disliking books. The climax of the play occurs when Walter rejects the offer from the Welcoming Committee; both Mama and Ruth declare their pride in this deeply flawed man. By dramatizing the crises they face before they arrive at these decisions, Hansberry shows that wealth is not always as desirable as it seems, and she reminds us of the sacrifices people make for their freedom. In the opening scene, Travis asks his mother for fifty cents, and the seemingly paltry sum is too much for the impoverished Ruth Younger to give away. Ruth considers an abortion because her unborn child would drain the Youngers of the little money they currently have. As Mama argues, Ruth's money-saving abortion would represent a moral defeat for the Youngers, an acknowledgment that the family does not have the love and energy to support a new person. Beneatha, Walter, and the others ultimately choose abstract ideals—education, dignity, love—over easy alternatives that hold out the promise of more money. Ruth laughs when Walter gives his fifty cents to Travis; the couple acknowledges that the act of generosity is the right decision. Mama does not argue with Beneatha when she announces her rejection of George, and Beneatha comments on this rare instance of maternal understanding. Like Ruth and Walter, we initially think that any offer of cash is a blessing for the Youngers because it represents a chance to abandon their dingy apartment and begin a new life. But as the story unfolds, the Younger family must repeatedly weigh their wish for material wealth against their wish for freedom. Although Beneatha doesn't love George Murchison, her family tells her to continue dating him and taking pride in the match, because George comes from a wealthy family. A financial offer from the Clybourne Welcoming Committee briefly seduces Walter: The money would give him an opportunity to start his own business and become rich. Again and again, the rejection of wealth is a cause for celebration among Hansberry's characters. The investment in a house for Travis delights each of the Youngers except Walter, and even Walter eventually recognizes the dignity and wisdom behind this hard decision. No family should have to make the choices that confront the Youngers as their dreams are repeatedly deferred. Walter pleads with his mother to donate her ten thousand dollars to his liquor-store scheme, arguing that the Youngers would benefit from the liquor sales. However, each time the Youngers are presented with an opportunity to gain or save their money, they must relinquish something else that is valuable. Ruth chooses not to have an abortion, to Mama's great relief. Each time a character turns down an easy financial offer, the other characters applaud his farsightedness and strength. The Black characters she describes must defend their right to an education, a loving home, and a sense of self-worth—even when the white community wants to pay them to abandon these ideals. Throughout the play, Hansberry conveys a sense

of anger and disgust. Throughout the play, members of the Younger family act as if money is too precious to be parted with. Nowhere in *A Raisin in the Sun* does a character guiltlessly accept or hold onto his or her money. It's surprising that money turns out to be a villain in the Younger family's story. But Hansberry shows that no price is high enough for freedom.