

ESSAYS ON AMERICAN LITERATURE SIGNPOSTS AND LANDMARKS

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Jan

**Lorraine Hansberry's *A Raisin in the Sun*:
A Timely Classic**

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Abstract: The paper revisits one of the most recognized works of African American drama, *A Raisin in the Sun*, the 1959 play by the celebrated Lorraine Hansberry. The aim is to explore its contribution to the shaping of black drama, its capturing of the voice of the civil rights movement, its presentation of the black American dream, the black family prototype and man-woman relations, its anticipation of Pan-African stance of the approaching, sixties' Black Arts movement, the articulation of ideas related to black beauty and identity, and becoming an inspiration to generations of black artists, writers, and performers. The paper examines why Hansberry continues to stay on the American literary scene.

Keywords: African American, Racism, Black Identity

Lorraine Hansberry's *A Raisin in the Sun* (1959) is celebrated for being the first play on Broadway by an African American woman writer. The play received numerous awards, and much acclaim in the mainstream media, almost as if this was the first time a black had written a play. The play, however, was much more than the tag that was put on it. A simple tale of a middle-class black family, their dreams and aspirations, the play was about their plans to gainfully use the insurance money received at the death of the father. Reviewed today, the play seems familiar and possible in contemporary America, at that time; it was taken as expressing a universal dream of an ordinary family, black or white. Immensely relatable, this was the play's strength, but also a hindrance as white audiences missed the connotations of the black, while black scholars and artists, especially in the racially charged environment of the sixties, were resentful at finding Hansberry's pitch against the white, not sharp enough. As a result, Hansberry's work,

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