

LORRAINE HANSBERRY: *A Raisin in the Sun*

Remember to support your ideas with details from the writing.

Either * 1

Read this passage carefully, and then answer the question that follows it:

- Walter* [to RUTH]: Well, they look crazy as hell—white shoes, cold as it is.
- Ruth* [*crushed*]: You have to excuse him—
- Walter*: No, he don't! Excuse me for what? What you always excusing me for! I'll excuse myself when I needs to be excused! [*Pause.*] They look as funny as them black knee socks Beneatha wears out of here all the time. 5
- Ruth*: It's the college *style*, Walter.
- Walter*: Style, hell. She looks like she got burnt legs or something!
- Ruth*: Oh, Walter—
- Walter* [*an irritable mimic*]: Oh, Walter! Oh, Walter! [to GEORGE]: How's your old man making out? I understand you all going to buy that big hotel on the Drive? [*He finds a beer in the refrigerator, wanders over to GEORGE, sipping and wiping his lips with the back of his hand and straddling a chair backwards to talk to the other man.*] Shrewd move. Your old man is all right, man. [*Tapping his head and half winking for emphasis.*] I mean he knows how to operate. I mean he thinks *big*, you know what I mean, I mean for a home, you know? But I think he's kind of running out of ideas now. I'd like to talk to him. Listen, man, I got some plans that could turn this city upside down. I mean I think like he does. *Big*. Invest big, gamble big, hell, lose *big* if you have to, you know what I mean. It's hard to find a man on this whole Southside who understands my kind of thinking—you dig? [*He scrutinises GEORGE again, drinks his beer, squints his eyes and leans in close, confidential, man to man.*] Me and you ought to sit down and talk sometimes, man. Man, I got me some ideas... 10 15 20
- George* [*with boredom*]: Yeah—sometimes we'll have to do that, Walter.
- Walter* [*understanding the indifference, and offended*]: Yeah—well, when you get the time, man. I know you a busy little boy. 25
- Ruth*: Walter, please—
- Walter* [*bitterly, hurt*]: I know ain't nothing in this world as busy as you coloured college boys with your fraternity pins and white shoes...
- Ruth* [*covering her face with humiliation*]: Oh, Walter Lee— 30
- Walter*: I see you all all the time—with the books tucked under your arms—going to your—[*He mimics the British 'a'.*] 'clahsses'. And for what? What the hell you learning over there? Filling up your heads—[*counting off on his fingers.*] —with the sociology and the psychology. But they teaching you how to be a man? How to take over and run the world? They teaching you how to run a rubber plantation or a steel mill? Naw—just to talk proper and read books and wear them faggoty-looking white shoes... 35

- George* [looking at him with distaste, a little above it all]: You're all whacked up with bitterness, man.
- Walter* [intently, almost quietly, between the teeth, glaring at the boy]: And you – ain't you bitter, man? Ain't you just about had it yet? Don't you see no stars gleaming that you can't reach out and grab? You happy? –you contented son-of-a-bitch –you happy? You got it made? Bitter? Man, I'm a volcano. Bitter? Here I am a giant –surrounded by ants! Ants who can't even understand what it is the giant is talking about. 40
45
- Ruth* [passionately and suddenly]: Oh, Walter –ain't you with nobody?
- Walter* [violently]: No! 'Cause ain't nobody with me! Not even my own mother!
- Ruth*: Walter, that's a terrible thing to say!

[from Act 2 Scene 1]

What does Hansberry's writing make you feel about Walter at this moment in the play?

Or † 2

Explore the ways in which Hansberry makes the generation gap between Mama and her children such a powerful part of the play.