

LORRAINE HANSBERRY: *A Raisin in the Sun*

Remember to support your ideas with details from the writing.

- Either 1** Read this passage, and then answer the question that follows it:
- Walter enters. We feel the edge of unreality is still with him*
- Walter:** New York ain't got nothing Chicago ain't. Just a bunch of hustling people all squeezed up together – being 'Eastern'.
(*He turns his face into a screw of displeasure.*)
- George:** Oh – you've been? 5
- Walter:** Plenty of times.
- Ruth** (*shocked at the lie*): Walter Lee Younger!
- Walter** (*staring her down*): Plenty! (*Pause.*) What we got to drink in this house? Why don't you offer this man some refreshment. (*To George.*) They don't know how to entertain people in this house, man. 10
- George:** Thank you – I don't really care for anything.
- Walter** (*feeling his head, sobriety coming*): Where's Mama?
- Ruth:** She ain't come back yet.
- Walter** (*Looking George over from head to toe, scrutinising his carefully casual tweed sports jacket over cashmere V-neck sweater over soft eyelet shirt and tie, and soft slacks, finished off with white buckskin shoes*): Why all you college boys wear them faggoty-looking white shoes? 15
- Ruth:** Walter Lee!
George ignores this remark.
- Walter** (*to Ruth*): Well, they look crazy as hell – white shoes, cold as it is. 20
- 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.
- Ruth:** It's the college style, Walter. 25
- 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 ... 30
- 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. 35
- 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 ... 40
- Ruth** (*covering her face with humiliation*): Oh, Walter Lee – 45

- 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 ... 50
- George* (*looking at him with distaste, a little above it all*): You’re all whacked up with bitterness, man. 55
- 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. 60
- Ruth* (*passionately and suddenly*): Oh, Walter – ain’t you with nobody? 65
- Walter* (*violently*): No! ‘Cause ain’t nobody with me! Not even my own mother!

How does Hansberry powerfully convey Walter’s feelings to you in this extract?

- Or** **2** Which character in the play does Hansberry make you particularly admire, and for what reasons? Support your answer by close reference to the play.