

### **How does Hansberry make this such an engaging moment in the play?**

In this extract, Hansberry engages the audience through her description of the relationship between mama and Walter. The relationship initially presented by Hansberry appears strained and both mama and Walter are obviously troubled: Walter by the lack of control he feels he has over his life and mama by the actions of Walter in neglecting his responsibilities. Hansberry effectively shows the strength of this relationship as the characters are reunited by the end of the extract and the mood is more positive.

The extract begins with a long speech from Walter which shows that he is dominating the conversation. The speech is long and rambling which shows just how strained their relationship is as even though he addresses mama, he clearly doesn't require a response from her. Walter begins his outburst by declaring, 'Mama—you don't know all the things a man what got leisure can find to do in this city'. The use of a dash immediately after 'mama' could suggest the division that exists between them as they are effectively divided by this dash in his speech. The dash also results in a pause which further reinforces the idea that they are currently unable to reach each other. In addition, the use of a dash is particularly powerful in revealing the struggle he is undergoing in order to express and explain himself. Furthermore, the fact that his speech begins with 'mama' shows that he is demanding her attention and taking control of the relationship the audience see on stage. The use of her name also could represent his desperation as it almost seems as if he is pleading with her. This sense of desperation displayed by Walter effectively engages the audience as Hansberry purposefully presents us with a vulnerable Walter who is struggling not only with his inner turmoil, but the relationships he has with those he is closest to.

As the extract progresses, we see a change in mood as the speech of the characters shift. The extract begins with Walter controlling the dialogue however halfway through we see mama take over this role as she then delivers a lengthy speech directed towards him. This deviation engages the audience as they can see that mama is once again taking charge and we hope that she will be able to get through to Walter and console him. The change in mood is further highlighted through the stage directions attributed to mama. Mama admits that she has been 'wrong' and Hansberry describes how 'she meets his eyes pleadingly'. The use of the word 'pleadingly' also reminds us of the pleading nature of Walter's initial use of 'mama' to demand her attention at the start of this extract. Hansberry's choice of stage direction here creates the impression that mama has suddenly realised the pain he has suffered due to his racial and economic position in American society and the struggle he has been having with his own role and identity. This is particularly powerful for the audience as we are able to not only understand mama's feelings about being 'wrong', but also her pain in realising this as she 'pleads' for his forgiveness. We can also see that the stage direction 'pleadingly' changes the mood from strained and tense to tender and nurturing. The audience, who are watching this interaction would definitely sense the emotion in mama's voice and actions and Hansberry successfully shows how important their relationship is as we see it begin to improve.

This change in their relationship is further solidified through the use of the characters' language. The end of the extract sees mother and son reunited and the audience is engaged through the way they speak to each other. What is particularly engaging is the fact that throughout the extract they've appeared separate and distant and at points Walter hasn't even acknowledged his mother. However, towards the end of the extract, not only do they seem to be reunited, but the way that

they repeat each other's words shows just how in sync they are again. When Walter realises he is to be given the money he asks 'You trust me like that, Mama?'. The word 'trust' is then repeated by mama when she says 'I ain't never stop trusting you'. The fact that they share and repeat this word creates a positive and hopeful tone as Hansberry shows us how strong their bond is. In addition, the word itself is especially significant as 'trust' is something that good relationships are built on and this suggests to the audience that this bond is unbreakable. Moreover, as Walter asks this question to his mother, it shows that not only does he desire trust from her, but also shows that he is re-engaging with both the relationship and mama.

## LORRAINE HANSBERRY: A Raisin in the Sun

Remember to support your ideas with details from the writing.

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

MAMA What you been doing for these three days, son?

WALTER Mama—you don't know all the things a man what got leisure can find to do in this city ... What's this— Friday night? Well—Wednesday I borrowed Willy Harris' car and I went for a drive ... just me and myself and I drove and drove ... Way out ... way past South Chicago, and I parked the car and I sat and looked at the steel mills all day long. I just sat in the car and looked at them big black chimneys for hours. Then I drove back and I went to the Green Hat. *(Pause)* And Thursday—Thursday I borrowed the car again and I got in it and I pointed it the other way and I drove the other way—for hours—way, way up to Wisconsin, and I looked at the farms. I just drove and looked at the farms. Then I drove back and I went to the Green Hat. *(Pause)* And today—today I didn't get the car. Today I just walked. All over the Southside. And I looked at the Negroes and they looked at me and finally I just sat down on the curb at Thirty-ninth and South Parkway and I just sat there and watched the Negroes go by. And then I went to the Green Hat. You all sad? You all depressed? And you know where I am going right now—

*(RUTH goes out quietly)*

MAMA Oh, Big Walter, is this the harvest of our days?

WALTER You know what I like about the Green Hat? I like this little cat they got there who blows a sax ... He blows. He talks to me. He ain't but 'bout five feet tall and he's got a conked head and his eyes is always closed and he's all music—

MAMA *(Rising and getting some papers out of her handbag)* Walter—

WALTER And there's this other guy who plays the piano ... and they got a sound. I mean they can work on some music ... They got the best little combo in the world in the Green Hat ... You can just sit there and drink and listen to them three men play and you realize that don't nothing matter worth a damn, but just being there—

MAMA I've helped do it to you, haven't I, son? Walter I been wrong.

WALTER Naw—you ain't never been wrong about nothing, Mama.

MAMA Listen to me, now. I say I been wrong, son. That I been doing to you what the rest of the world been doing to you. *(She turns off the radio)* Walter—*(She stops and he looks up slowly at her and she meets his eyes pleadingly)* What you ain't never understood is that I ain't got nothing, don't own nothing, ain't never really wanted nothing that wasn't for you. There ain't nothing as precious to me ... There ain't nothing worth holding on to, money, dreams, nothing else—if it means—if it means it's going to destroy my boy. *(She takes an envelope out of her handbag and puts it in front of him and he watches her without speaking or moving)* I paid the man thirty-five hundred dollars down on the house. That leaves sixty-five hundred dollars. Monday morning I want you to take this money and take three thousand dollars and put it in a savings account for Beneatha's medical schooling. The rest you put in a checking account—with your name on it. And from now on any penny that come out of it or that go in it is for you to look after. For you to decide. *(She drops her hands a little helplessly)* It ain't much, but it's all I got in the world and I'm putting it in your hands. I'm telling you to be the head of this family from now on like you supposed to be.

WALTER *(Stares at the money)* You trust me like that, Mama?

MAMA I ain't never stop trusting you. Like I ain't never stop loving you.

*(She goes out, and WALTER sits looking at the money on the table. Finally, in a decisive gesture, he gets up, and, in mingled joy and desperation, picks up the money. At the same moment, TRAVIS enters for bed)*

TRAVIS What's the matter, Daddy? You drunk?

WALTER *(Sweetly, more sweetly than we have ever known him)* No, Daddy ain't drunk. Daddy ain't going to never be drunk again....

TRAVIS Well, good night, Daddy.

*(The FATHER has come from behind the couch and leans over, embracing his son)*

**Q: How does Hansberry make this such an engaging moment in the play?**