

RAISIN IN THE SUN

QUOTATIONS FOR WRITING

THE FAMILY & THE AMERICAN DREAM

WALTER:

DREAMS OF SUCCESS:

- Walter talks about the missed business opportunity with Charlie Atkins. P.32
- Complains that he has nothing to pass on to Travis. “I have been married eleven years and I got a boy who sleeps in the livingroom -- and all I got to give him is stories about how rich white people live...” p. 34
- To Mama: “Do you know what this money means to me? Do you know what this money can do for us? Mama—Mama—I want so many things.” P. 73
- Mama: “Son, how come you talk so much ‘bout money?” Walter: “Because, it is life, Mama!” Mama: “Oh—so now its life. Money is life. Once upon a time freedom use to be life—now its money. I guess the world really do change...” Walter: “No—it was always money, Mama. We just didn’t know about it.” p. 74
- “Listen, man, I got some plans that could turn this city upside down. I mean 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?” p. 84
- Walter to George: “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? ... Here I am a giant—surrounded by ants. Ants who can’t even understand what it is the giant is talking about” p.85
- Walter to Travis: “Just tell me where you want to go to school and you’ll go. Just tell me, what it is you want to be—and you’ll be it... Whatever you want to be—Yessir! You just name it, son... and I hand you the world!” p. 108

HARSH REALITY:

- “You all always telling me to see life like it is. Well—I laid in there on my back today...and I figured it out. Life just like it is. Who gets and who don’t get. Mama, you know it’s all divided up. Life is. Sure enough. Between the takers and the “tooken.” I’ve figured it out finally. Yeah. Some of us always getting “tooken.” People like Willy Harris, they don’t never get “tooken.” And you know why the rest of us do? ‘Cause we all mixed up. Mixed up bad. We get to looking ‘round for the right and the wrong; and we worry about it and cry about it and stay up nights trying to figure out ‘bout the wrong and the right of things all the time...And all the time, man, them takers is out there operating, just taking and taking.” P. 141, 142
- “Forget it baby! There ain’t no causes—there ain’t nothing but taking in this world, and he who takes most is smartest—and it don’t make a damn bit of difference how.” P. 143

LIQUOR STORE DEAL:

- “This ain’t no fly-by-night proposition, baby. I mean we figured it out, me and Willy and Bobo.” Page 33
- Ruth, quoting Walter: “Walter Lee say colored people ain’t never going to start getting ahead till they start gambling on some different kinds of things in the world—investments and things. ... He needs this chance Lena.” P. 42

FAMILY SUPPORT:

- Complains that Ruth won’t do anything to help him. “You couldn’t be on my side that long for nothing, could you. ... A man needs for a woman to back him up...” Page 32
- Ruth doesn’t listen. “Man say to his woman: I got me a dream. His woman say: Eat your eggs. Man say: I got to take hold of this here world, baby! And a woman will say: Eat your eggs and go to work. Man say: I got to change my life, I’m choking to death, baby! And his woman say – Your eggs is getting cold!” page 33,34
- “That is just what is wrong with the colored woman in this world ... Don’t understand about building their men up and making ‘em feel like they somebody. Like they can do something.” Page 34
- After being told off by Beneatha: “Nobody in this house is ever going to understand me.” Page 38
- Beneatha: “Brother isn’t really crazy yet—he—he’s an elaborate neurotic.” P. 49
- “WILL SOMEBODY PLEASE LISTEN TO ME TODAY!” P. 70
- Mama to Walter: “Something eating you up like a crazy man. Something more than me not giving you this money. The past few years I been watching it happen to you. You get all nervous acting and kind of wild in the eyes—“ p. 72
- Ruth: “Oh Walter—ain’t you with nobody!” Walter: “No! ‘Cause ain’t nobody with me! Not even my own mother!” p. 85
- “Walter—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.” P. 106

DIGNITY AS A MAN

- “Mama, a job? I open and close car doors all day long. I drive a man around in his limousine and I say, ‘Yes, sir; no, sir; very good, sir; shall I take the Drive, sir?’ Mama, that ain’t no kind of job... that ain’t nothing at all.” P. 73
- “Sometimes its like I can see the future stretched out in front of me—just plain as day. The future, Mama. Hanging over there at the edge of my days. Just waiting for me—a big, looming blank space—full of nothing. Just waiting for *me*. But it don’t have to be.” P. 73,74
- Mama to Walter: “I’m waiting to hear how you be your father’s son. Be the man he was... Your wife say she going to destroy your child. And I’m waiting to hear you talk like him and say we a people who give children life, not who destroys them-- I’m waiting to see you stand up and look like your

daddy and say we done give up one baby to poverty and that we ain't going to give up nary another one ...I'm waiting. ... You are a disgrace to your father's memory." P. 75

- "In my heart of hearts—I am much warrior." P. 78
- Walter to George: "What the hell you learning over there? Filling up your heads—with sociology and psychology—but they teaching you how to be a man? How to take over and run the world?" p. 84, 85
- Walter to Ruth: "Sometimes I don't even know how to try." P. 89
- Mama: "It's just a plain little old house—but it's made good and solid—and it will be ours. Walter Lee—it makes a difference in a man when he can walk on floors that belong to *him*..." p. 92
- Walter to Mama: "What you need me to say you done right for? You the head of this family. You run our lives like you want to. It was your money and you did what you wanted with it. So what you need me to say it was all right for? So you butchered up a dream of mine—you—who always talking 'bout your children's dreams." P. 94,95
- Mrs. Johnson: "I know being a chauffeur ain't never satisfied Brother none. He shouldn't feel like that, though. Ain't nothing wrong with being a chauffeur." Mama: "There's plenty wrong with it." Johnson: "What?" Mama: Plenty. My husband always said being any kind of a servant wasn't a fit thing for a man to have to be . He always said a man's hands was made to make things, or to turn the earth with—not to drive nobody's car for 'em—or—carry they slop jars. And my boy is just like him—he wasn't meant to wait on nobody." P. 103
- Mama: "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: "You trust me like that, Mama?" Mama: "I ain't never stop trusting you. Like I ain't never stop loving you." P. 106
- Walter, learning that Willy ran off with all the money: "THAT MONEY IS MADE OUT OF MY FATHER'S FLESH—" p. 128
- Mama to Walter: "I seen...him...night after night...come in ...and look at that rug...and then look at me...the red showing in his eyes...the veins moving in his head...I seen him grow thin and old before he was forty... working and working and working like somebody's old horse...killing himself...and you—you give it all away in a day--." P. 129
- Mama: "Son—I come from five generations of people who was slaves and sharecroppers—but ain't nobody in my family never let nobody pay 'em no money that was a way of telling us we wasn't fit to walk the earth. We ain't never been that poor. We ain't never been that--dead inside." Beneatha: Well—we are dead now. All the talk about dreams and sunlight that does on in this house. It's all dead now." P. 143
- "What's the matter with you all! I didn't make this world! It was give to me this way! Hell, yes, I want pearls 'round my wife's neck. Ain't s supposed to wear no pearls? Somebody tell me—tell me, who decides which women is

suppose to wear pearls in this world. I tell you I am a man—and I think my wife should wear some pearls in this world!” p. 143

- About groveling to Mr. Lindner, Mama asks, “Baby, how you going to feel on the inside. ... You won’t have nothing left then, Walter Lee.” P. 144
- Walter, pretending to speak to Lindner: ““Oh, yassuh boss! Great white—Father, just gi’ ussen de money, fo’ God’s sake, and we’s—we’s ain’t gwine come out deh and dirty up yo’ white folks neighborhood...’ And I’ll feel fine! Fine! FINE!” Beneatha: “That is not a man. That is nothing but a toothless rat.” P. 144
- Mama to Beneatha: “When you starts measuring somebody, measure him right, child, measure him right. Make sure you done taken into account what hills and valleys he come through before he got to wherever he is.” P. 145
- Mama to Walter as Walter prepares to grovel before Lindner: “You show [Travis] where our five generations done dome to.” P. 147
- Mama to Ruth (about Walter): “He finally come into his manhood today, didn’t he? Kind of like a rainbow after the rain...” p. 151

RUTH’S DREAM:

A BETTER HOUSE (OR LIVING SITUATION):

- “I would rather be living in Buckingham Palace.” Page 34
- Mama meddles about Travis. Ruth frustrated. Page 40, 41
- To Mama about a new house (revealing her attitude about their current quarters): “Well, Lord knows, we’ve put enough rent into this here rat trap to pay for four houses by now...” p, 44
- To Mama about little Claude: “Ain’t nothin’ can tear at you like losin’ your baby.” P. 45
- Beneatha, confirming Ruth’s assessment of the apartment, says that the only way to kill the roaches is to burn down the building. P. 57
- Beneatha, on Ruth’s pregnancy: “It is my business—where is he going to live, on the roof?” p. 58 This comment supports Ruth’s feeling about the small, claustrophobic nature of their living arrangement.
- Beneatha: “Lord, they’re chasing a rat!” p. 58 Ruth freaks out about the vermin-infested apartment.
- Asagai to Beneatha: “You look disturbed too... Is something wrong?” Beneatha: “Yes...we’ve all got acute ghetto-ittis.” P. 60
- Mama to Walter: “I think Ruth is thinking ‘bout getting rid of that child. ... When the world gets ugly enough—a woman will do anything for her family.” P. 75
- Ruth to Mama: “So you went and did it [bought a house]! ... PRAISE GOD! Please, honey—let me be glad...you be glad, too. Oh, Walter...a home...a *home*.” P. 91,92
- Ruth to Walter: “I don’t know where we lost it...but we have. I—I’m sorry about this new baby, Walter. I guess maybe I better go on and do what I started...I guess I just didn’t realize how bad things was with us.” P. 87

- Ruth to Walter: “Honey...life don’t have to be like this. I mean sometimes people can do things so that things are better... You remember how we used to talk when Travis was born...about the way we were going to live...the kind of house... Well, it’s all starting to slip away from us...” p. 89
- “Well—well!—All I can say is –if this is my time in life—MY TIME—to say goodbye to these goddamn cracking walls!—and these marching roaches!—and this cramped little closet which ain’t now or never was no kitchen! ...then I say it loud and good, HALLELUJAH! AND GOODBYE MISERY...I DON’T NEVER WANT TO SEE YOUR UGLY FACE AGAIN!” P. 93,94
- “Lena—I’ll work...I’ll work twenty hours a day in all the kitchens in Chicago...I’ll strap my baby on my back if I have to and scrub all the floors in America and wash all the sheets in America if I have to—but we got to MOVE! We got to get OUT OF HERE!!” P. 140

TO BELIEVE IN WALTER:

- “Honey, you never say nothing new. I listen to you every day, every night and every morning, and you never say nothing new.” Page 34
- “Yes, life can be a barrel of disappointments sometimes.” P. 45
- Ruth about Walter: “Oh let him go on out and drink himself to death! He makes me sick to my stomach!” p. 71
- Mama to Walter: “Ruth’s a good patient girl in her way—but you getting to be too much. Boy, don’t make the mistake of driving that girl away from you.” P. 72

BENEATHA’S DREAM:

CAREER:

- Walter speaking: “Ain’t many girls to decide to be a doctor.” Page 36
- Ruth, retorting sarcastically to Walter: “Forgive me for wanting to be anything at all?” p. 37
- Walter to Beneatha: “Who the hell told you you have to be a doctor? If you so crazy ‘bout messing ‘round with sick people—then go be a nurse like other women—or just get married and be quiet...” p. 38
- “...But first I’m going to be a doctor, and George, for one, still thinks that’s pretty funny. I couldn’t be bothered with that. I’m going to be a doctor and everybody around here better understand that!” p. 50
- “I never got over that... ...That that was what one person could do for another, fix him up—set up the problem, make him all right again. That was the most marvelous thing in the world...I wanted to do that. I always that it was the one concrete thing in the world that a human being could do. Fix up the sick, you know—and make them whole again. ...I wanted to cure. It used to be so important to me. I wanted to cure. It use to matter. I use to care.” P. 133

INDEPENDENCE:

- “I have never asked anyone around here to do anything for me!” p. 37

- Beneatha: “People have to express themselves one way or another.” Mama: “What is it you want to express?” Beneatha: “Me!” p. 48
- Beneatha: “Oh, I just mean I couldn’t ever really be serious about George. He’s—he’s so shallow.” Ruth: “Well—what other qualities a man got to have to satisfy you, little girl?” Beneatha: “You wouldn’t even begin to understand. Anybody who married Walter could not possibly understand.” P. 48
- “No I would not marry him if all I felt for him was what I feel now.” P. 49
- “Get over it? What are you talking about, Ruth? Listen, I’m going to be a doctor. I’m not worried about who I’m going to marry yet—if I ever get married.” P. 50
- “I’m just tired of hearing about God all the time. What has He got to do with anything. Does He pay tuition? ... It’s just that I get tired of Him getting credit for all the things the human race achieves through its own stubborn effort. There simply is no blasted God—there is only man and it is *he* who makes miracles!” p. 50
- Beneatha to Asagai: “You never understood that there is more than one kind of feeling which can exist between a man and a woman—or, at least, there should be.” P. 63
- Asagai calls Beneatha Alaiyo: “It means...it means One for Whom Bread—Food—Is Not Enough.” P. 65
- Mama to Beneatha: “Where you going?” Beneatha: “To become a queen of the Nile!” p. 67
- George to Ruth: “You’re a nice looking girl...all over. That’s all you need honey, foret the atmosphere. Guys aren’t going to go for the atmosphere—they’re going to go for what they see. Be glad for that. Drop the Garbo routine. It doesn’t go with you. As for myself, I want a nice—simple—sophisticated girl...not a poet—O.K.?” p. 96

DISCOVERING HER IDENTITY IN A WHITE-DOMINATED CULTURE

- “All anyone seems to know about when it comes to Africa is Tarzan—“ p. 57
- Asagai and Beneatha discuss her hair. “It’s not mutilation!” p. 62
- “Do you remember the first time you met me at school? ... You came up to me and you said--and I thought you were the most serious little thing I had ever seen—you said: ‘Mr. Asagai—I want very much to talk with you. About Africa. You see, Mr. Asagai, I am looking for my identity!’” p. 62
- Asagai about Beneatha’s looks: “It is true that this is not so much a profile of a Hollywood queen as perhaps a queen of the Nile. But what does it matter? Assimilationism is so popular in your country.” Beneatha: “I am not an assimilationist!” p. 63
- Ruth to Beneatha: “You expect this boy to go out with you with your head all nappy like that?” Beneatha: “That’s up to George. If he’s ashamed of his heritage-- ...I hate assimilationist Negroes! ...Someone who is willing to give up his own culture and submerge himself completely in the dominant, and in this case *oppressive* culture!” p. 80, 81
- George to Beneatha: “Let’s face it, baby, your heritage is nothing but a bunch of raggedy-assed spirituals and some grass huts!” Beneatha: “Grass huts! See there...you are standing there in your splendid ignorance talking about people

who were the first to smelt iron on the face of the earth! The Ashanti were performing surgical operations when the English were still tattooing themselves with blue dragons.” P. 81

- Walter: “You know, when these New Negroes have their convention— (pointing at his sister)—that is going to be the chairman of the Committee on Unending Agitation. Race, race, race! ... Girl, I do believe you are the first person in the history of the entire human race to successfully brainwash yourself. Damn, even the N double A C P takes a holiday sometimes!” p. 112, 113

MAMA’S DREAM:

PLANT (SYMBOL):

- “Lord, if this little old plant don’t get more sun than it’s been getting it ain’t never going to see spring again.” Page 40
- “They spirited all right, my children. Got to admit they got spirit—Bennie and Walter. Like this little old plant that ain’t never had enough sunshine or nothing—and look at it... “ p. 52
- “Well, I always wanted me a garden like I used to see sometimes at the back of the houses down home. This plant is close as I ever got to having one.” P. 53
- Beneatha: “Mama, what are you doing?” Mama: “Fixing my plant so it won’t get hurt none on the way...” Beneatha: Mama, you going to take that to the new house?” Mama: “Un-huh—“ Beneatha: “That raggedy-looking old thing?” Mama: It expresses ME!” p. 121
- Mama grabs her plant and exits the apartment for the last time. P. 151

MAMA’S DREAMS:

- “Lord, ever since I was a little girl, I always remembers poeople saying, ‘Lena--Lena Eggleston, you aims too high all the time. You needs to slow down and see life a little more like it is. Just slow down some.’ That’s what they always used to say down home—’Lord, that Lena Eggleston is a high-minded thing. She’ll get her due one day!’” P. 139
- “Sometimes you just got to know when to give up some things...and hold on to what you got...” p. 140

MAINTAINING THE FAMILY DIGNITY:

- “Now don’t you start child. It’s too early in the morning to be talking about money. It ain’t Christian.” Page 41
- “We ain’t no business people, Ruth. We just plain working folks.” P. 41
- About the liquor store idea: “Well—whether they drinks it or not ain’t none of my business. But whether I go into business selling it [liquor] to ‘em is, and I don’t want that on my ledger this late in life.” P. 42
- “Somebody would of thought my children done all but starved to death the way they talk about money here late.” P. 43

- To Beneatha: “Now—you say after me, in my mother’s house there is still God. ... There are some ideas we ain’t going to have in this house. Not long as I am at the head of this family.” P. 51
- “Now don’t act silly... We ain’t never been no people to act silly ‘bout no money.” P. 68
- To Walter: “Can’t you give people a Christian greeting before you start talking about money?” p. 70
- “Son—you—you understand what I done, don’t you? I-I just seen my family falling apart today...just falling to pieces in front of my eyes... We couldn’t of gone on like we was today. We was going backwards ‘stead of forwards—talking ‘bout killing babies and wishing each other was dead... When it gets like that in life—you just got to do something different, push on out and do something bigger.” P. 94
- Mama: “Son—I come from five generations of people who was slaves and sharecroppers—but ain’t nobody in my family never let nobody pay ‘em no money that was a way of telling us we wasn’t fit to walk the earth. We ain’t never been that poor. We ain’t never been that--dead inside.” Beneatha: Well—we are dead now. All the talk about dreams and sunlight that does on in this house. It’s all dead now.” P. 143

HONORING BIG WALTER’S MEMORY—THAT HIS LIFE AND HIS DEATH HAD MEANING

- About Big Walter: “But he sure loved his children. Always wanted them to have something—be something. That’s where Brother gets all these notions, I reckon. Big Walter used to say...’Seem like God didn’t see fit to give the black man nothing but dreams—but He did give us children to make them dreams seem worth while.” P. 46
- Ruth: “He was a good man, Mr. Younger.” Mama: “Yes, a fine man—just couldn’t never catch up with his dreams, that’s all.” P. 46
- Mama to Walter: “You something new, boy. In my time we was worried about not being lynched and getting to the North if we could and how to stay alive and still have a pinch of dignity, too... Now here come you and Beneatha—talking ‘bout things we ain’t never even thought about hardly, me and your daddy. You ain’t satisfied or proud of nothing we done.” P. 74
- Mama to Travis: “Now when you say your prayers tonight, you thank God and your grandfather—‘cause it was him who give you the house—in his way.” P. 91
- “I seen...him...night after night...come in ...and look at that rug...and then look at me...the red showing in his eyes...the veins moving in his head...I seen him grow thin and old before he was forty...working and working and working like somebody’s old horse...killing himself...and you—you give it all away in a day--.” P. 129

A HOUSE WITH A GARDEN:

- “Been thinking that we maybe could meet the notes on a little old two-story somewhere, with a yard where Travis could play in the summertime, if we use part of the insurance for a down payment and everybody kind of pitch in.” p. 44

- About their current apartment: “‘Rat trap’—yes, that’s all it is. I remember just as well the day me and Big Walter moved in here. Hadn’t been married but two weeks and wasn’t planning on living here no more than a year. We was going to set away, little by little, don’t you know, and buy a little place out in Morgan Park. We had even picked out the house. ... But child, you should know all the dreams I had ‘bout buying that house and fixing it up and making me a little garden in the back—And didn’t none of it happen.” P.45
- “Well, I always wanted me a garden like I used to see sometimes at the back of the houses down home.” P. 53
- Mama to Travis: “Well—what you think your grandmamma gone and done with that money? ... She went out and she bought you a house. You glad about the house? It’s going to be yours when you get to be a man.” P. 91
- Mama: “It’s just a plain little old house—but it’s made good and solid—and it will be ours. Walter Lee—it makes a difference in a man when he can walk on floors that belong to *him*...” p. 92
- Travis buys Mama a “gardening” hat. P. 124

FAMILY QUOTES:

- Walter: “Me and Ruth done made some sacrifices for you—why can’t you do something for the family?” p. 37
- “Yes, life can be a barrel of disappointments sometimes.” P. 45
- About Big Walter on the death of little Claude: “Oh, that man grieved hisself. He was one man to love his children. ... I guess that’s how come that man finally worked hisself to death like he done. Like he was fighting his own war with this here world that took his baby from him.” P. 45
- Lindner: “Well—you see our community is made up of people who’ve worked hard as the dickens for years to build up that little community. They’re not rich and fancy people; just hard-working, honest people who don’t really have much but those little homes and a dream of the kind of community they want to raise their children in. ... A man, right or wrong, has the right to want to have the neighborhood he lives in a certain kind of way.” P. 117
- Lindner: “What do you think you think you are going to gain by moving into a neighborhood where you just aren’t wanted and where some elements—well—people can get awful worked up when they feel that their whole way of life and everything they’ve ever worked for is threatened.” P. 119
- Asagai to Beneatha: “Then isn’t there something wrong in a house—in a world, where all dreams, good or bad, must depend on the death of a man.” P. 135
- Walter, pretending to speak to Lindner: “‘Oh, yassuh boss! Great white—Father, just gi’ ussen de money, fo’ God’s sake, and we’s—we’s ain’t gwine come out deh and dirty up yo’ white folks neighborhood...’ And I’ll feel fine! Fine! FINE!” Beneatha: “That is not a man. That is nothing but a toothless rat.” P. 144

- LOVE. Mama to Beneatha: “What you tell him a minute ago? That he wasn’t a man? Yes? You give him up for me? You done wrote his epitaph too—like the rest of the world? Well, who give you the privilege?” Beneatha: “...Wasn’t it you who taught me to despise any man who would do that? Do what he’s going to do?” Mama: Yes—I taught you that. Me and your daddy. But I thought I taught you something else too...I thought I taught you to love him.” Beneatha: “Love him? There is nothing left to love.” Mama: “There is *always* something left to love. And if you ain’t learned that, you ain’t learned nothing.” P. 145
- “...We come from people who had a lot of pride. I mean—we are very proud people. And that’s my sister over there and she’s going to be a doctor—and we are very proud-- ...What I am telling you is that we called you over here to tell you that we are very proud and that this—Travis, come here. This is my son, and he makes the sixth generation our family in this country. And he have all thought about your offer ... and we have decided to move into our house because me father—my father—he earned it for us brick by brick. We don’t want to make no trouble for nobody or fight no causes, and we will try to be god neighbors. And that’s all we got to say about that. We don’t want your money.” P. 148