

Princess Mfum

Professor Kevin Pinkham

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How does the Role of Motherhood play a part in "A Raisin in the Sun" and "Girl" and how do the authors incorporate the Struggle for freedom and Identity in both literary works?

Both the play "A Raisin in the Sun" by Lorraine Hansberry and the book "Girl" by Jamaica Kincaid have motherhood as a major theme. The two pieces examine the duties and obligations put on mothers in different kinds of cultures. While Kincaid's book explores the expectations placed on mothers and daughters in the context of Caribbean culture, Hansberry's play explores the struggles of a single mother in 1950s America. I will compare and contrast how moms are portrayed in these two works as I read more about the importance of motherhood in these two works.

Lena Younger in "A Raisin in the Sun," represents the conventional motherly role in 1950s American culture. Lena assumes the burden of supporting her family and making sure her kids have a better future as a widow. Lena's Christian faith and her appreciation for the value of maintaining a strong family unit have impacted her values. She frequently serves as a mediator between her children, working to settle arguments and asking for their aid in times of need. Lena is a nurturing mother, but being a single parent comes with many difficulties. Despite facing financial hardships and racial discrimination, she struggles to maintain the family and their home. Lena's obligations place a great deal of strain on her, and she frequently vents her

frustration and tiredness to her loved ones. She makes sacrifices to make sure that her kids have a better future, but she remains constant in her love to them.

Lena plays a traditional mother, but Jamaica Kincaid's "Girl" shows a harsh, authoritarian mother who controls every aspect of her daughter's life. The mother gives her daughter instructions on how to act, dress, and connect with others. The culture and customs of the Caribbean, where women are obligated to conform to strict gender standards and behave in a particular way, have an impact on the mother's expectations. The mother's lessons are intended to equip her daughter with the skills necessary for survival in the outside world while also preparing her for these societal expectations. The mother's instructions, which are frequently repetitious and harsh, show her strictness and control. She warns her daughter over and over again to "walk like a lady" and "don't sing benna on Sundays." Additionally, she cautions her daughter against approaching men, telling her not to "squat down to play marbles - you are not a boy, you know." The mother's instructions are intended to keep her daughter safe and to make sure she acts in a way that is appropriate for society.

Lena and the mother in "Girl" have different parenting styles, but they both aim to protect their kids and prepare them for the challenges of the outside world. While the mother's strictness is meant to make sure that her daughter is ready for the realities of society, Lena's sacrifices are driven by her desire to give her children a better life. Lena struggles to keep her family together, while the mother in "Girl" struggles with societal expectations and gender standards. Both mothers struggle to fulfill their duties. These two works' depictions of motherhood also speak to broader society norms and gender roles. In "A Raisin in the Sun," Lena's role as a single mother emphasizes the difficulties encountered by women in 1950s America, where racial discrimination and gender inequity were prevalent. Her racial and financial situation, which

restrict her opportunities and increase her responsibilities, make Lena's problems even more difficult. Similar to how the mother in "Girl" is influenced by Caribbean cultural customs, which heavily emphasize gender roles and expectations. These are reflected in the mother's instructions to her daughter.

The two texts also explore the theme of freedom and Identity. Beneatha Younger, a young, aspirational college student in "A Raisin in the Sun," wants to become a doctor. In a society that is opposed to both, she continues to struggle to define her identity as a black woman. Walter, Beneatha's brother, criticizes her for holding "assimilationist" beliefs and makes an effort to push his own ideas of identity on her. Additionally, Beneatha is under pressure from her mother, who wants her to follow gender norms and marry a reliable man. Beneatha, on the other hand, ignores all of this and takes control of her identity by working toward her goal of becoming a doctor. Beneatha ignores traditional gender norms as a way to express her freedom and identity. She wears a natural hairstyle, which in 1950s America is considered unconventional and radical. She also doesn't want to be a "wife" and instead wants to be a successful professional. Beneatha emphasizes her wish to be seen as an individual with her own identity and goals when she tells her Nigerian suitor Joseph Asagai, "I am not a symbol, I am a human being," in a conversation. Beneatha opposes assimilationist ideas in order to continue to emphasize her independence and identity. She refuses her brother's attempts to push his own identity theories on her and chooses to embrace her African ancestry instead. In order to better portray her African background, she even changes her name to "Beneatha Mbiti" and learns African dances and dress patterns. Beneatha maintains her own unique status as a black woman by rejecting assimilationist viewpoints.

In "Girl," the main character is under pressure to uphold social norms of what it means to be a woman in her society. But she disregards her mother's expectations in order to assert her own independence and identity. Her use of words is one way in which she sets her individuality and independence. She opposes her mother's authority by adding questions during her mother's directions. When her mother urges her to sing "benna in Sunday school," for example, she says, "but what if the baker won't let me feel the bread?" With this question, she faces the gender stereotypes that have been placed upon her and shows her own right to interpret the world as she sees fit. The main character rejects traditional gender roles as another means of claiming her freedom and identity. She challenges the idea that women are less valuable than males and asks as to why certain behaviors are expected of her. For instance, she asks, "But what if the baker won't let me feel the bread?; you mean to say that after all you are really going to be the kind of woman the baker won't let near the bread?" in response to her mother's advice not to squeeze bread before purchasing it. This question challenges the gender roles that have been assigned to her and claims her own right to treatment.

