

Writers who Influenced Lorraine Hansberry: Langston Hughes

By Marlin Ellis

Lorraine Hansberry came across a lot of people who influenced her writings throughout the course of her life. One of the most influential was a writer named Langston Hughes. Langston Hughes was at the forefront of the Harlem Renaissance in New York City which is most likely why he drew Hansberry's interest. Langston's primary form of writing was poetry, but he also wrote some well-known plays as well.

Hansberry actually met Hughes while she was attending the New School for Social research in New York City. It was there that Lorraine was able to immerse herself in the Harlem Renaissance. She lived on the Lower East side and was able to see how life was changing for African Americans in Greenwich Village and Harlem. Langston Hughes was right in the thick of it just as Hansberry was beginning to get a taste of the times.

Lorraine Hansberry used a line from one of Hughes' poems titled "Harlem" for the inspiration that led to the title of her play *A Raisin in the Sun*. The first line is as follows: "What happens to a dream deferred? Does it dry up like a raisin in the sun?"

Hansberry and Hughes also shared a very similar way of writing. They both used themes of hope, joy and despair. They also both wrote of the trials and tribulations of African Americans and racism both from the past and their present time. They were truly revolutionary writers.

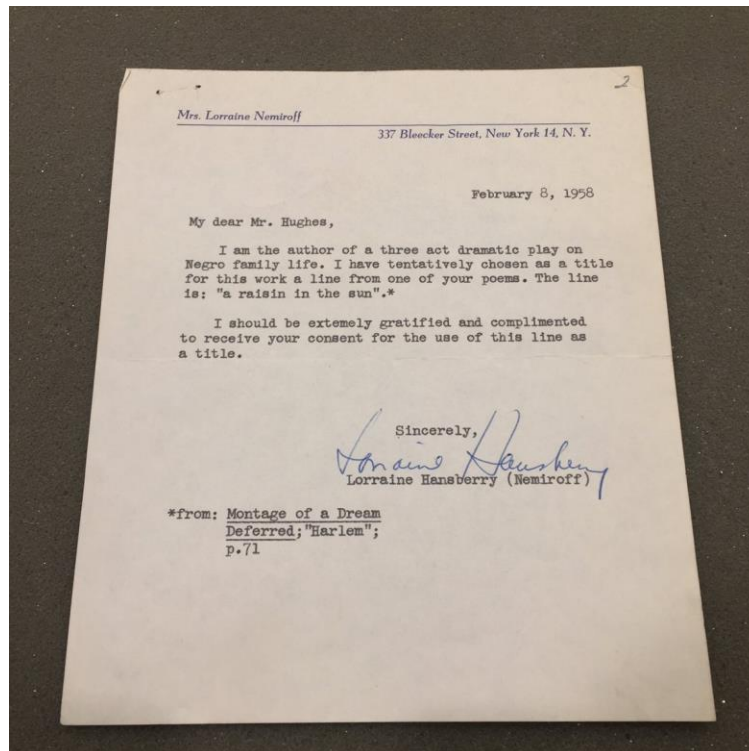


Image of a letter from Lorraine Hansberry to Langston Hughes regarding the title of her play *A Raisin in the Sun*

Sources:

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<https://www.anoisewithin.org/langston-hughes-poetic-inspiration-lorraine-hansberry/>