

A Raisin in the Sun: Rhetorical Devices

Museum Connection: Arts and Intellect

Purpose: This lesson is designed to challenge students to discuss how Asagai uses the resources of language to present his point of view to Beneatha. The final analysis question is similar to those found on the Advanced Placement English Examinations.

Course: American Literature

Time Frame: 45-60 minute class

Correlation to State Standards:

Standard 1: The student will comprehend and interpret a variety of print, non-print, and electronic texts, and other media.

Indicator 1.2 The student will comprehend and interpret a variety of texts, including fiction, nonfiction, poetry, drama, and informational texts (e.g., articles, editorials, essays, speeches, literary criticism).

Objective 1.2.1 The student will determine the contributions of literary elements in classical and contemporary literary texts.

Standard 3: The student will compose in a variety of modes by developing content, employing specific forms, and selecting language appropriate for a particular audience and purpose.

Indicator 3.1 The student will compose written, oral, and multimedia presentations in a variety of formats and for a variety of audiences and purposes.

3.1.1 The student will compose effective informative or expository texts (e.g., literary analysis and other academic compositions and essays; descriptions; summaries; world-related texts (e.g., brochure, proposals, project plans, resumes).

Maryland State Common Core Standards:

- RL1 Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text, including determining where the text leaves matters uncertain.
- I6 Determine an author's point of view or purpose in a text in which the rhetoric is particularly effective, analyzing how style and content contribute to the power, persuasiveness, or beauty of the text.
- W1 Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.
- W4 Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

Objective: Students will complete a close reading of Asagai's speech to Beneatha in order to analyze the effect of rhetorical devices on a speaker's message.

Vocabulary and Concepts:

Word or Concept	Definition
Absolute	A word free from limitations or qualifications
Alliteration	The repetition of initial sounds in successive or neighboring words.
Allusion	A reference to something literary, mythological, or historical that the author assumes the reader will recognize.
Analogy	A comparison that points out similarities between two dissimilar things.
Anaphora	Repetition of words or phrases at the beginning of consecutive lines or sentences.
Anecdote	A brief narrative often used to illustrate an idea or make a point.
Aphorism	A short, pithy statement that expresses succinctly a general truth or idea, often using rhyme or balance. Also called <i>adage</i> or <i>maxim</i> .
Asyndeton	A construction in which elements are presented in a series without conjunctions.
Diction	Purposeful choice of words

Ellipsis	Three periods used to indicate a pause in speech, an unfinished thought, or, at the end of a sentence, a trailing off into silence to inspire a feeling of melancholy longing.
Ethos	The element in literature that appeals to beliefs, morals, habit, and attitudes, often of the speaker.
Exclamation	An abrupt, forceful utterance
Figurative	In contrast to literal language, figurative language implies meanings.
Imagery	Language that appeals to the senses.
Literal	In contrast to figurative language, language that adheres to the primary meaning.
Logos	The element in literature that appeals to reason; focus is on the content of the text.
Metaphor	A direct comparison of two different things.
Parallelism	The use of identical or equivalent syntactic constructions in corresponding clauses or phrases for rhetorical effect
Paradox	A statement that seems self-contradictory but is, nevertheless, true.
Pathos	That element in literature that stimulates pity or sorrow from the reader or audience.
Personification	Endowing non-human objects or creatures with human qualities or characteristics.
Polysyndeton	The use of more conjunctions than is necessary or natural
Pun	A play on words that are identical or similar in sound but have sharply diverse meanings.
Repetition	Deliberate reuse of the same sounds, words, phrase, or ideas for effect, usually to emphasize a point.
Rhetorical question	A question to which the audience already knows the answer; a question asked merely for effect with no answer expected.
Synecdoche	A form of metaphor that utilizes a part as a representative or whole.

Materials:

For the Teacher:

Teacher Resource Sheet 1: SOAPStone for Beneatha and Asagai--Key
 Teacher Resource Sheet 2: Rhetorical Analysis

For the Student:

Student Resource Sheet 1: SOAPStone for Beneatha and Asagai--Key

Student Resource Sheet 2: Rhetorical Analysis

Student Resource Sheet 3: Timed Writing

Resources:

Publications:

Hansberry, Lorraine. *A Raisin in the Sun: a Drama in Three Acts*. New York: Random House, 1959. Print.

Holman, C. Hugh, William Harmon, and William Flint Thrall. *A Handbook to Literature*. New York: Macmillan, 1986, Print.

The AP Vertical Teams Guide for English. [New York]: College Entrance Examination Board, 2002. Print.

Web Sites:

For famous speeches: www.americanrhetoric.com

For information on Lorraine

Hansberry: <http://womenshistory.about.com/od/aframerwriters/p/hansberry.htm>

For information on cultural

assimilation: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cultural_assimilation

Historical Background:

Lorraine Vivian Hansberry was born on May 19, 1930 in Chicago, Illinois. Her grandparents were freed slaves. Her father was a successful real estate broker and banker, while her mother was a schoolteacher. Lorraine's parents were active in the black community, including the National Association of Colored People (NAACP) and Urban League.

When Lorraine was eight years old, her parents moved to Washington Park, a predominately white neighborhood. Because of the long practice of segregation and the restrictive covenant that the neighborhood had against integration, her family was violently attacked by neighbors. A mob even threw bricks into their home, nearly hitting Lorraine in the head. Because of the Hansberry's

determination to challenge the restrictive covenant, they refused to move until the court ordered them, an action which led to the U.S. Supreme Court case known as *Hansberry vs. Lee*. Because the Supreme Court's ruling found restrictive covenants illegal, the Hansberrys won the case. Despite this ruling, enforcement of these covenants was not stopped in Chicago and other cities throughout the United States.

After Lorraine graduated from high school in 1948, she attended the University of Wisconsin for two years. Because she loved the Humanities, she left college to go to New York City to pursue her writing career. She attended The New School for Social Research, worked for Paul Robeson's newspaper entitled *Freedom*, and worked with W.E.B. DuBois, whose office was in the same building. During this time in 1957, she wrote *A Raisin in the Sun*. The title was inspired from the poem, "Harlem," written by Langston Hughes. The play was the first written by an African American woman to be produced on Broadway, and it had 530 successful performances. As a result, at age 29, Hansberry was the first black playwright and youngest American to win a New York Drama Critics Circle Award for Best Play.

A Raisin in the Sun is about the Youngers, an extended family living in a run down two-bedroom apartment on the south side of Chicago. The family includes Walter and Ruth Younger, their son Travis, Walter's mother Lena, and his sister Beneatha. Walter is a limousine driver who is barely making a living. He is not as content with his life and seeks to become rich by investing in a liquor store partnership with a street smart man named Willy. Walter's mother is expecting \$10,000 in life insurance money from her husband's death, and Walter believes that he is entitled to the money.

Due to Walter's persistence, his mother gives part of the money to him. Walter gives the money to Willy who runs off with it. Meanwhile, a representative from the new white neighborhood offers the Youngers money to not move into their new home. After some consideration, the Youngers, under the new leadership of Walter, decide to move into the new house. There is a mixture of uncertainty, danger, and hope as the Youngers embark on their journey into the future.

There were several other versions of the play and they are as follows:

- ✓ 1961 film
- ✓ 1973 musical
- ✓ 1989 TV film
- ✓ 2004 Broadway revival
- ✓ 2008 TV film

Lorraine Hansberry died on January 12, 1965 at age 34 after a struggle with pancreatic cancer.

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lorraine_Hansberry

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/A_Raisin_in_the_Sun

<http://www.gradesaver.com/author/lorraine-hansberry>

<http://www.biography.com/people/lorraine-hansberry-9327823>

<http://womenshistory.about.com/od/aframerwriters/p/hansberry.htm>

Lesson Development:

Motivation:

1. Direct students to write a response to the quotation from author Rita Mae Brown, “Language exerts hidden power, like a moon on the tides.” Students will support, refute, or qualify this assertion.
2. Direct students to think about a time that they or someone they knew manipulated language in order to persuade someone to do something or believe something. They may write about the speaker’s or writer’s use of language, or they may discuss the situation with a partner. Discuss these examples as a class, focusing on how speakers use rhetorical devices to support an argument. Ask: How might the outcome of the situation have been different if the language would have been manipulated in a different manner?

Procedures:

3. Ask leading questions in class discussion format to encourage students to review the action of the play, *A Raisin in the Sun*, through the end of Act II. http://books.google.com/books?id=uhqXaQkT2NUC&pg=PA3&source=gbs_toc_r&cad=4
4. Inform students that this lesson will focus on the conversation between Beneatha and Asagai at the beginning of Act III. They will read from the beginning of Act III to Asagai’s exit, completing the SOAPStone chart on Student Resource Sheet A: SOAPStone for Beneatha and Asagai. After providing a synopsis of the plot leading up to the scene, you may ask two students to read the parts in order to bring the scene to life in the classroom. Doing this will also help in emphasizing that these rhetorical devices are

authentic and that people really do use them to try to persuade people to see their points of views. The text maybe revisited as needed and performed by students.

5. Direct students to review the literary terms listed in the word bank at the top of Student Resource Sheet B: Rhetorical Analysis. They should highlight any rhetorical device that is not familiar to them and then define it using a glossary of literary terms.
6. Direct students to reread the conversation between Beneatha and Asagai in Act III in order to identify rhetorical devices at work in the passage. Complete the chart on Student Resource Sheet B: Rhetorical Analysis.
7. Direct students to highlight the devices on the chart that most effectively support the speaker's message and purpose.

Assessment:

8. Direct students to answer the AP-style essay question on Student Resource Sheet C: Timed Writing

Closure:

9. Direct students to revisit the Rita Mae Brown quotation from the beginning of the lesson. In class discussion or in writing, invite the students to revise their original thoughts about the power of language.

Thoughtful Applications:

- Challenge students to consider how the action of the play might have been different if the speakers were not as adept at using rhetorical devices in order to persuade.
- Students may consider Lorraine Hansberry's message to the audience. What is she challenging her audience to believe or to do? How is her message similar to or different from what Asagai wants Beneatha to believe and do?
- Students may investigate the pros and cons of cultural assimilation and segregation with regard to a variety of cultures during a variety of eras.

- Compare Lorraine Hansberry’s life to that of Beneatha. Comment on the similarities and differences. Does Hansberry have more in common with Beneatha or with Asagai?

Lesson Extensions:

- Upon visiting the Reginald F. Lewis Museum, students may find a speech or other text that utilizes rhetorical devices for an intended effect and write an analysis of that speech with regard to the historical situation.
- Examine other speeches such as those found at www.americanrhetoric.com to consider the effect of rhetorical devices. Students may copy and paste the text of the speech into a new Microsoft Word document and use the “Insert Comment” feature to annotate the text, commenting on the effectiveness of the devices in supporting the content of the speech.
- Using www.americanrhetoric.com, students may consider the similarities and differences between effective speeches from real life and the movies.

Teacher Resource Sheet 1: SOAPSTone for Beneatha and Asagai—Key

	Asagai	Beneatha
<p>Speaker <i>Who is the speaker? What are his/her characteristics?</i></p>	Native of Nigeria who has come to study in the US; interested in a romantic relationship with Beneatha; serves as her intellectual mentor	Daughter of Lena Younger; lived her whole life in an apartment in Chicago; feminist; exploring her African roots
<p>Occasion <i>What has led to this conversation?</i></p>	Asagai has come to help Beneatha pack to move to the new house in the white neighborhood	Beneatha is distraught because her brother has lost the money that was to support her education and her family's move to the new house in the white neighborhood
<p>Audience <i>Who is meant to hear these words?</i></p>	Beneatha and the audience of the play (Americans in 1960s to present day)	Asagai and the audience of the play (Americans in 1960s to present day)
<p>Purpose <i>What does the speaker hope to accomplish?</i></p>	Asagai wants Beneatha to come to Nigeria with him and to release the hold that prejudice and oppression has had on her and her life; he wants her to be independent of the intellectual, emotional, and financial constraints that society has put on her	She wants sympathy from Asagai; she wants him to see that her dreams are ruined and that she is a victim of other people's mistakes and shortcomings
<p>Subject <i>What is the topic or content of the speech?</i></p>	Beneatha's future; assimilation; life in Nigeria; independence; self-actualization	Beneatha's future; assimilation; life in Nigeria; independence; self-actualization
<p>Tone <i>What is the attitude or mood conveyed by the speaker?</i></p>	Hopeful, passionate, emphatic	Distraught, angry, longing

Teacher Resource Sheet 2: Rhetorical Analysis--Key

Rhetorical Devices Word Bank			
Absolute	Asyndeton	Literal	Polysyndeton
Alliteration	Diction	Logos	Pun
Allusion	Ellipsis	Metaphor	Repetition
Analogy	Ethos	Parallelism	Rhetorical Question
Anaphora	Exclamation	Paradox	Synecdoche
Anecdote	Figurative	Pathos	
Aphorism	Imagery	Personification	

Quotation	Rhetorical Device	Effect of Device
A: Have I told you how deeply you move me?	Pun, literal, figurative	Referring to literal and figurative move; moving to new house; moving Beneatha's attitude/perception
B: Me?...Me...? (and through rest of that passage)	Ellipsis	Shows her incredulity and astonishment that Asagai is not more upset
A: Children see things very will sometimes—and idealists even better.	Aphorism	Short, calm response to Beneatha's passion. Makes her stop to consider the situation.
B: You still think you can patch up the world. Cure the Great Sore of Colonialism—with the Penicillin of Independence	Metaphor; allusion	Comparing the world to a torn garment that needs a patch; Asagai is seen as a doctor or tailor who can fix things; B. is mocking him
B: There is only one large circle that we march in A: It isn't a circle—it is simply a long line...	Analogy; Logos	Comparing life and history to geometric figures in order to show the difference in how they perceive the world. B. feels as if she is getting nowhere; A. feels they are constantly improving. He is logically leading her to agree with him
A: And it is very odd but those who see the changes—who dream, who will not give up—are called idealists	Repetition	Repeating "who" makes B. feel as if she wants to be one of them. He gives credibility to them and reveres them
A: But did you earn it? Would you have had it at all if your father had not died? Then isn't there something wrong in a house—in a world where dreams, good or bad, must depend on the death of a man?	Logos; rhetorical questions	A. is leading her to see her situation from a new perspective using logic—an "if-then" equation
A: I LIVE THE ANSWER!	Ethos	A. shows his credibility to speak to her about being personally responsible because he's doing it every day.
A: But I will teach and work and things will happen, slowly and swiftly.	Polysyndeton, alliteration	The repeated conjunctions show that he plods through what he believes and outcomes will happen.
A: The sudden dramatic events which make history leap into the future. And then quiet again.	Personification	Shows that history is something alive that can be changed

A: Guns, murder, revolution.	Asyndeton	Shows the multitude of things that can attack him. Endless list.
A: Perhaps	Repetition, anaphora	Uses "perhaps" seven times to show that there are many possible outcomes and that he cannot live in fear of them.
A: They who might kill me even...actually replenish all that I was.	Paradox	Shows how he turns the bad into good just as he is calling B. to do.
A: My dear, young creature of the New World	Allusion	He is showing how she is of the Americas and must find her roots in Africa.
A: Three hundred years later the African Prince rose up out of the seas and swept the maiden back across the middle passage over which her ancestors had come...I will show you our mountains and our stars; and give you cool drinks from gourds and teach you the old songs and the ways of our people...	Imagery, pathos	His lofty language shows her the splendor of finding her roots. She can visualize it.

Student Resource Sheet 1: SOAPStone for Beneatha and Asagai

	Asagai	Beneatha
Speaker <i>Who is the speaker? What are his/her characteristics?</i>		
Occasion <i>What has led to this conversation?</i>		
Audience <i>Who is meant to hear these words?</i>		
Purpose <i>What does the speaker hope to accomplish?</i>		
Subject <i>What is the topic or content of the speech?</i>		
Tone <i>What is the attitude or mood conveyed by the speaker?</i>		

Student Resource Sheet 2: Rhetorical Analysis

Rhetorical Devices Word Bank			
Absolute	Asyndeton	Literal	Polysyndeton
Alliteration	Diction	Logos	Pun
Allusion	Ellipsis	Metaphor	Repetition
Analogy	Ethos	Paradox	Rhetorical Question
Anaphora	Exclamation	Parallelism	Synecdoche
Anecdote	Figurative	Pathos	
Aphorism	Imagery	Personification	

Quotation	Rhetorical Device	Effect of Device

Student Resource Sheet 3: Timed Writing

After reading the beginning of Act III of *A Raisin in the Sun* (from the beginning to Asagai's exit), analyze how one of the two characters uses the resources of language to support his or her message.
