Act it Out! During-Reading Strategy
For *A Raisin in the Sun* by Lorraine Hansberry

**Context**
This strategy is to be used during reading and will continue throughout the reading of the play as students work on their assignment. This can be condensed stretched out according to the pace of reading, but is a strategy that covers various sections of the play and will need multiple class periods.

**Purpose**
This strategy is to not only help increase student’s comprehension of the play, but to also deepen student’s understanding of the structure of a play and it’s dependence on visual clues given by the characters and stage directions. This will also help students understand multiple points of views and perspectives as they take on the roles of several characters. Students will see written and visual versions of the text to gain a better understanding of the characters and their actions. This strategy will also challenge students to think about the text and their interpretation of what happens and be able to effectively communicate their thoughts.

**Directions**

**Step One:** Before beginning reading the play with students, group students together (about 4-5 per group) and assign each group a particular scene in which they must prepare to act out in front of the class. Explain to the students that it is completely up to them how they choose to perform their interpretation of the scene, but that they are expected to be in complete character and use props (Teacher may have to provide some). Students will perform in the classroom unless they ask and reserve another spot. Scenes should already be broken up by the teacher according to schedule and natural breaking points in the text. Possible scenes to assign would include page 35 when Beneatha comes in – 39 when Walter leaves, Beginning of act two p 54– entrance of Asagi p60, scene between Beneatha and Asagi, beginning of Act two, the exchange between Walter and George and so on. It’s important to be careful of language if students are sensitive to it.

**Step Two:** To demonstrate the assignment, do the first scene as a class. Ask different students to read lines from a designated character. Characters to include are Walter, Ruth, Lena (Mama) Beneatha, Travis, Asagai, George, Mr. Lindner, Mrs. Johnson, and Bobo. Multiple students can play each character. (You can skip acting out for this) Read first scene out loud as a class. Stop at various times to discuss the actions of the play, what each character did and if it either lines up with what you know about the character and their intentions, and how their actions move the plot. Also discuss the stage directions and how they influence the interpretations of the scene.

**Step Three:** After students perform the scene, discuss various interpretations students had of their designated character based on descriptions in the text or stage directions and how that affected their reading/understanding of the events occurred. In a specific notebook for this unit, ask questions such as: What would Walter’s face look like after hearing that news? How is Ruth’s stance? What kind of attitude does Beneatha carry? What kind of clothes does Travis have on? What does the stage look like at this time? What kind of props are included? What kind of movement would occur during this scene? Ask students to orally describe the visual aspects they imagine as they read the text, explaining their choices for costume prop and character interpretation. For those students
who are not acting out roles for that day, you can possibly ask them to draw out how they envisioned the play, or have them write it out in words. They can then compare their drawing or paragraph to what was actually performed. This is what the students must think about before they act out the play for the class.

Step Four: As class continues on reading the play over the next few days/weeks, the assigned scenes to each group will be performed. Each group will have to then defend their interpretation to the class and answer any questions students may have about their scene in comparison to the text or their personal interpretation and experiences.

Step Five: Have each group do a write up on their performance and a reflection based on the classroom reaction as a final assessment.

A Note for Teachers
- This activity may not work for all classes. It is a bigger project that may make some students uncomfortable. There is potential for students to get out of hand.
- Another idea would be for students to take on the role of a character, answering questions as they think their character would, while other students prepare to ask that character questions in an interview or debate format. This takes up less class time and students don’t have to perform in front of peers.
- A lesson on the structure of play and how to read it may be necessary prior to this project
- If desired, after a scene is performed via student’s perspective, you could watch a film version of the play and discuss similarities and differences in how each character acted.

Assessment
This project allows for student creativity and forces them to think about what they are reading and how they are reading it. This project also gives students the opportunity to work with other students and express their ideas and perspectives in a comfortable and exciting manner. The question and answer after, forces the group to be able to defend their reasoning as well as encourages the rest of the class to think of essential questions based on the group’s performance. Students will be challenged to think from various points of view that agree and disagree with their own. It is an exciting activity that allows students to branch out from the basic text and think about the author’s intended message, its implications, and whether the text communicates those effectively.
Act it Out!

_A Raisin in the Sun_

Because _A Raisin in the Sun_ is a play, the best way to study it is to see it! As we read, pre-assigned groups will prepare various scenes to act out in front of the class. Props, costumes, and line reading will all be expected in each performance. Who plays which character is up to the members of the group, but everyone must participate. Each group will act out their designated scene according to their own interpretation of characters and events. This means you can get creative; you can do a more modern interpretation or follow the stage directions in the text. (If you want to stray a little great! Just come talk to me first)

Each group must be prepared to explain their choices after they perform. The rest of the class will be prepared with their own ideas of how the scene played out and we can compare different ideas with what was performed and what Hansberry possibly intended. (Yes you still have to read each scene!) These discussions will be rooted in the differences between groups and what the rest of the class prepared, how they added to your understanding of the play and what you liked or didn’t like about a particular scene. The performed scenes don’t have to be the greatest acting, this is more for you to show that you understand what is happening in the text and to explore the characters a little bit.

If you feel extremely uncomfortable getting up in front of class and acting, come see me and we’ll work something out. The narrator and reading of the stage directions is just as important as any character!

Write down members of your group and contact information. Once you have a group of four or five come see me to pick your scene and the date it will be performed. This assignment is worth 50 points so choose wisely!

Name: _____________________________ Contact: _____________________________

1. _____________________________

2. _____________________________

3. _____________________________

4. _____________________________

5. _____________________________

Date of Performance: _____________________________

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