

## Unit 7/Week 4

Title: On Summer

Suggested Time: 5 days (45 minutes per day)

Common Core ELA Standards: RI.9-10.1, RI.9-10.2, RI.9-10.3, RI.9-10.6; W.9-10.1, W.9-10.4, W.9-10.9; SL.9-10.1, SL.9-10.6; L.9-10.1, L.9-10.2, L.9-10.4, L.9-10.5

### Teacher Instructions

#### **Preparing for Teaching**

1. Read the Big Ideas and Key Understandings and the Synopsis. Please do **not** read this to the students. This is a description for teachers about the big ideas and key understanding that students should take away **after** completing this task.

#### Big Ideas and Key Understandings

Summer symbolizes the vibrancy of life.

#### Synopsis *(Taken from About the Selection, pg. 656)*

Lorraine Hansberry uses elements of narrative, persuasive and reflective essays to highlight memorable moments in her life where she learns valuable lessons about life. Hansberry recalls her childhood dislike of summers. She remembers playing games with friends in the streets of Chicago and sleeping in the park when the nights made the house too hot. During her eighth summer, she meets her grandmother in Tennessee. On a summer trip to Maine as an adult, she meets an elderly woman dying of cancer. Through conversations with this woman, Hansberry learns to respect and value summer as “the noblest of all the seasons.”

2. Read the entire selection, keeping in mind the Big Ideas and Key Understandings.
3. Re-read the text while noting the stopping points for the Text Dependent Questions and teaching Tier II/academic vocabulary.

### **During Teaching**

1. Students read the entire selection independently.
2. Teacher reads the text aloud while students follow along or students take turns reading aloud to each other. Depending on the text length and student need, the teacher may choose to read the full text or a passage aloud. For a particularly complex text, the teacher may choose to reverse the order of steps 1 and 2.
3. Students and teacher re-read the text while stopping to respond to and discuss the questions, continually returning to the text. A variety of methods can be used to structure the reading and discussion (i.e., whole class discussion, think-pair-share, independent written response, group work, etc.)

### Text Dependent Questions

<b>Text-dependent Questions</b>	<b>Evidence-based Answers</b>
In the first paragraph on page 656, Hansberry provides an overview of her feelings on each of the seasons. Summarize how she feels about each.	Hansberry refers to the winter and fall seasons as emotional states of being. To her, the winter is cold and aloof, often dull and muted in contrast to the vividness of summer. And the fall is “melancholy” and “despondent”. Her feelings about the first two seasons appear to be favorable, contradicting her negative feelings about the summer. She even goes as far as to “worship” the winter and express passionate commitment to fall in her adolescent years. Inversely, she states that “ <i>summer</i> was a mistake.”
On page 656, Hansberry says, “nature had got inexcusably carried away on the summer question and let the whole thing	She supports her belief that nature got carried by referencing the length of a summer day and how “pronounced” and in

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<p>get to be rather much.” What textual evidence can you find to explain what she means by this?</p>	<p>sharp focus everything appeared and sounded. Specifically, she states that the “duration” of the day “seemed maddingly excessive”, objects were in “too sharp relief”, “shadows too pronounced”, and “light too blinding”, and sound came to the ear “without the muting influence” found in winter. In other words, it was too much for the senses--an overload.</p>
<p>On page 656, Hansberry says she worshipped the “cold aloofness of winter.” What does aloofness mean here? What connection can you draw between Hansberry’s desire for an aloof season and her feelings on summer at this point?</p>	<p>Aloofness means to be distant or removed (defined for students in the margin). Her statement about liking and even worshipping an aloof season, such as winter, emphasizes why she battles with summer so strongly. She views summer as being oppressive, in your face, and all-consuming; this is quite the opposite of being aloof.</p>
<p>According to Hansberry, how did families in Chicago spend summer days and nights? (Pgs. 657-659)</p>	<p>Hansberry describes summer days as including street games that comprised of songs and rhymes. The photograph on page 657 further illustrates the images of summer days explained in the essay. Families in Hansberry’s Chicago neighborhood would spend the summer evenings on the back porch listening to the different night sounds. When the weather got too hot, the entire family would go to the park and sleep out in the open on blankets, while the parents told stories of their youth.</p>
<p>Reread pages 657 through 659. What shifts do we start to see in Hansberry’s point of view?</p>	<p>On page 657, Hansberry’s recollection of summer begins to change. She starts acknowledging that some “rememberers” reminisce favorably upon the ordinary fun she had as a child. For them, street games turned into “fine ballets” and childhood rhymes became “modern poetry.” After acknowledging other people’s memories, Hansberry begins to use terms like “very special summertime sounds” when referring to screen door slams. She remembers the special times she had with her family sleeping on blankets in the park. She states, “Those were, of course, the best times of all because the grownups were invariably reminded of having been children in rural parts</p>

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	<p>of the country and told the best stories then.” Hansberry ends this section with fond memories of travelling to her mother’s birthplace and remarking on the “beautiful hills on both sides of the highway.” Her view of summer is gradually shifting to a more positive one. This new view differs from earlier in the essay when she refers to summer as “a mistake” and describes her dislike of summer.</p>
<p>How would you describe the author’s attitude toward her grandmother? Cite textual evidence to support your response. What might be the purpose of including the description of her grandmother at this point in the text? (Pgs. 659-660)</p>	<p>Hansberry describes her great grandmother as a once beautiful woman who enjoyed the summer the young Hansberry spent with her. By using a simile to compare her grandmother’s wrinkles to that of a prune, Hansberry helps the reader see the age of a woman who could “hardly hear and barely see.” Despite the fact that her grandmother was beautiful, “a half century before”, the young Hansberry appears to hold affection towards her grandmother, as evidenced by the fact that she paid attention to her grandmother’s tendencies and experiences. She includes memories of her grandmother having difficulty with car windows and loving to go on drives. She describes how her grandmother made “wonderful cupcakes like cornbread, only sweet.”</p> <p>The author’s purpose for including the description of her grandmother could vary: Her trip to see her grandmother was an example of how she spent one summer. It sets the scene for the author to transition to her next recollection: her summer in Maine and the cancer-stricken woman she met there.</p>
<p>Using specific words and phrases from the text, compare and contrast Hansberry’s attitude toward her grandmother and her attitude toward the woman in Maine. Then, in one sentence, summarize how she views each woman. (Pgs. 660-661)</p>	<p>Grandmother: “wrinkled as a prune”; “wonderful cupcakes”; “sweet”; “captivated by automobiles”; “loved driving”</p> <p>Woman in Maine: “purposeful and courageous”; “radical viewpoint”; “energetically believe”; “absolutely refused”</p>

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	<p>It seems as though Hansberry loved her grandmother, but she had great admiration and respect for the other woman.</p>
<p>How does what Hansberry learned from the woman in Maine relate to her point of view regarding summer? (Pgs. 660-661)</p>	<p>This woman taught Hansberry a valuable lesson: to appreciate summers and the opportunities they provide to experience life. "Through her eyes I finally gained a sense of what it might mean: ...the gift of another summer... with the gentlest nights and, above all, the longest days" with "life at the apex." Summer offered this woman something that none of the other seasons could, and it was this realization that cemented Hansberry's new outlook on summer.</p>

**Tier II/Academic Vocabulary**

	<p><b>These words require less time to learn</b>                      (They are concrete or describe an object/event/                      process/characteristic that is familiar to students)</p>	<p><b>These words require more time to learn</b>                      (They are abstract, have multiple meanings, are a part                      of a word family, or are likely to appear again in future texts)</p>
<p><b>Meaning can be learned from context</b></p>	<p>Page 656 – maddeningly                      Page 660 – captivated                      Page 660 – stature                      Page 661 – austere                      Page 661 – frivolous                      Page 661 – noblest</p>	<p>Page 656 – lingering                      Page 656 – melancholy                      Page 660 – characteristically, characterization</p>
<p><b>Meaning needs to be provided</b></p>	<p>Page 656 – aloofness                      Page 656 – acutely                      Page 656 – stark                      Page 660 – brooding                      Page 660 – inexplicability                      Page 660 – ravages                      Page 661 – pretentious                      Page 661 – apex</p>	<p>Page 656 – esthetically                      Page 656, 661 – relief (two different meanings used)                      Page 658 – invariably                      Page 660 – negotiate                      Page 660 – formidable                      Page 660 – palpable                      Page 660 – despondency                      Page 660 – ribald                      Page 660 – mysticism                      Page 661 – pretentious</p>

## Culminating Writing Task

- Prompt

*At the end of Lorraine Hansberry’s essay, On Summer, she declares that summer is “the noblest of the seasons.” How does her perspective on summer change throughout the essay, and how does summer come to represent “the noblest of the seasons” by the end of the text? Compose an argument that is one page in length. Support your claims with valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence from the text, including direct quotes and page numbers.*

- Teacher Instructions

1. Students identify their writing task from the prompt provided.
2. Students complete an evidence chart as a pre-writing activity. Teachers should remind students to use any relevant notes they compiled while reading and answering the text-dependent questions.

<b><i>Evidence Quote or paraphrase</i></b>	<b><i>Page number</i></b>	<b><i>Elaboration / explanation of how this evidence supports ideas or argument</i></b>
“...my earliest memory of anything at all is of waking up in a darkened room where I had been put to bed for a nap on a summer’s afternoon, and feeling very, very hot. I acutely disliked the feeling then and retained the bias for years.”	656	At the beginning of the essay, Hansberry is direct and explicit regarding her reasons for disliking summer. She begins, here, with her earliest of all memories, which happens to be realizing her strong distaste for the effects of the summer heat.
Summer sounds “had a way of coming to the ear without that muting influence, marvelously common to winter.” “I suppose I found it too stark and yet too intimate a season.”	656	Hansberry continues to give evidence in the essay that supports her dislike for summer by describing the loudness and vibrancy of summer, especially in contrast to the muteness of winter. She sees it as being too imposing and overwhelming.
“My childhood Southside summers were the ordinary city kind, full of the street games” and evenings “spent mainly on the back porches where screen doors slammed in the darkness with	657-658	Hansberry’s feelings on Summer take a subtle shift here, with her referencing the street games and “special summertime sounds” of the screen door.

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those really very special summertime sounds”		
“[My grandmother] was captivated by automobiles because I don’t think she’d ever been in one before we came down and took her driving. She was a little afraid of them and could not negotiate the windows, but she loved driving.”	660	This memory of a summer spent in Tennessee with her family visiting her grandmother details a happier memory of summer.
“...one of those people who energetically believe that the world can be changed for the better and spend their lives trying to do just that.”	660	Hansberry describes the woman she met in Maine who helped transform her opinion regarding summer.
“I wished with all my power what I knew that she was wishing: that she might live to see at least one more <i>summer</i> . Through her eyes I finally gained the sense of what it might mean...the gift of another summer with its stark and intimate assertion of neither birth nor death but life at the apex; with the gentlest nights and, above all, the longest days.”	660	Hansberry’s time with the woman and the glimpses of “relief” that she saw in the woman’s face when she looked out at the mellow sunset, left her with the sense that the greatest of all answers to this woman’s struggle would be the gift of another summer. The essay seems to come full circle, here, with Hansberry’s adoring reference to summer’s “gentlest nights” and “longest days”-- nights that she viewed as stifling before and days that she felt were much too long in previous years.

- Once students have completed the evidence chart, they should look back at the writing prompt in order to remind themselves what kind of response they are writing (i.e. expository, analytical, argumentative) and think about the evidence they found. (Depending on the grade level, teachers may want to review students’ evidence charts in some way to ensure accuracy.) From here, students should develop a specific thesis statement. This could be done independently, with a partner, small group, or the entire class. Consider directing students to the following sites to learn more about thesis statements: <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/545/01/> OR [http://www.indiana.edu/~wts/pamphlets/thesis\\_statement.shtml](http://www.indiana.edu/~wts/pamphlets/thesis_statement.shtml).

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4. Students compose a rough draft. With regard to grade level and student ability, teachers should decide how much scaffolding they will provide during this process (i.e. modeling, showing example pieces, sharing work as students go).
5. Students complete final draft.

- Sample Answer

In her essay, *On Summer*, Lorraine Hansberry's perspective on summer drastically shifts from one of disdain to one of sheer admiration, as she begins to see the ways in which summer presents poignant opportunities to experience life to its fullest rather than an oppressive overstatement brought about as nature's cruel joke.

Hansberry begins her essay by establishing her feelings on the seasons as a young girl. She sets the stage by declaring that her earliest of all memories was of "waking up in a darkened room" after a summer's nap and "feeling very, very hot." Beyond "acutely dislik[ing]" the feelings of the oppressive heat, she felt as though "nature had got inexcusably carried away" by making summer days so long and its images and sounds so sharp, especially in comparison to the muted and dull winter (656). These descriptions are in sharp contrast to the ways in which she views the other seasons. From these early recollections, Hansberry solidifies a strong foundation for her feelings on summer; they are strong, vibrant, and unequivocally negative.

As the essay continues, the reader starts to catch glimpses of a shift in Hansberry's attitude, with these negative feelings starting to grow more positive in nature. These fleeting moments start with Hansberry's detailing of her childhood summers in Chicago. The days were filled with "street games" and nights with "those really very special summertime sounds" of slamming screen doors and "the best stories" shared on park blankets under the stars (657-658). It is these special sounds and stories that start to illuminate the shift in Hansberry's representation of the season. Her opinions have seemed to soften, and she is willing to at least acknowledge small ways in which one can enjoy summer.

From here, Hansberry includes details of the short yet memorable time she spent with her maternal grandmother in Tennessee and then moves to describing the turning point in her view on summer: the experiences she shared with a woman from Maine who was dying from cancer. Hansberry describes the woman as “...one of those people who energetically believe that the world can be changed for the better and spend their lives trying to do just that” (660). She admired the woman’s spirit, fight, and “delightfully ribald anger” when it came to dealing with her terminal fight. It is through this woman’s eyes that Hansberry is able to see clearly for the first time. It is not a “frivolous spring...full of too many false promises” or a “pretentious melancholy” seen in autumn or an “austere and silent winter” that this woman needed, but rather a season with “its stark and intimate assertion of neither birth nor death but life at the apex; with the gentlest nights and, above all, the longest days” (661). And this could only be brought on by summer, which Hansberry now understands as “the noblest of the seasons.” Yet, it was only through meeting this woman and seeing life through her eyes that Hansberry is able to come to this confident assertion.

### Additional Tasks

- *Students will watch the video from the link (<http://inspirationable.com/inspiring-video-called-summer-feelings/>). After watching the video, students will respond to the following prompt: Analyze both accounts of summer and determine which details are emphasized in each account.*

Answer: Both Hansberry’s essay and the inspirational video highlight the shades of summer and joy that can come from activities done within summer. The video and the essay both paint pictures for the reader and viewer of the diversity of summer and emotions that are evoked by summer.

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- *Have students identify Hansberry's uses of figurative language. Which details appeal to each of the five senses? Students may gather in a group and discuss their ideas on the essay's sensory details. Further discussion can occur around the question: How does figurative language enhance students' ability to understand and share in Hansberry's experiences? Additionally, students could write their own essays (or paragraphs) on the season of their choosing, describing memories they associate with their chosen season. They should use figurative language that appeals to the readers' five senses.*

Answer: Responses and written tasks will vary based on student interpretation of the essay and discussion.

### Note to Teacher

- If EL students need additional scaffolding and an apprentice text, it may be helpful to utilize adapted versions of "On Summer" in the *Adapted Reader's Companion* before reading the main text; however, this adapted version should not replace the reading the main text.