



To Be Young, Gifted, and Black: An Informal Autobiography

Lorraine Hansberry , Robert Nemiroff (Adapted by) , James Baldwin (Introduction)

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In her first play, the now-classic *A Raisin in the Sun*, Hansberry introduced the lives of ordinary African Americans into our national theatrical repertory. Now, Hansberry tells her own life story in an autobiography that rings with the voice of its creator.

To Be Young, Gifted, and Black: An Informal Autobiography Details

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Helena says

Not knowing much about lorraine hansberry at first, I started this book without any expectations. Immidately I found myself totally fascinated and drawn towards her beautiful words. I couldn't stop reading and it affected me so much. Telling of racism, sexism and other difficulties especially as a black woman she never fails to encourage people to use their voice, never stop dreaming and believing in a better world. Seriously I cried so many times while reading this! I recommend reading this to everyone :)

The Black Geek says

Hansberry, in her short lifetime, produced wonderful work that should be categorized as "American Classics". This book is still a timeless and unique treasure that should be read and appreciated...

Yossie says

What can—nay, what **do** I say?

A life, a brilliant life, cut much too short. But I wonder what would have happened should she have lived any longer. I am left with the gripping sense that it was meant to be this way.

What do you even say after you read Lorraine Hansberry? Nothing, that's what.

You just sit there, stare at the cover of the book, and cry. Not tears of sorrow, because she wouldn't want you to do that.

Tears of—and for—life.

You cry because Lorraine Hansberry wrote the stuff of your life. You cry because you drew life—simply—from her words. Most of all, you cry because you truly believe that you are young, gifted, and black—what she called a dynamic combination.

Though it be a thrilling and marvellous thing to be merely young and gifted in such times, it is doubly so, doubly dynamic—to be young, gifted, and black.

What a woman. What a way with words.

I leave you with this:

“I wish to live because life has within it that which is good, that which is beautiful, and that which is love. Therefore, since I have known all of these things, I have found them to be reason enough and—I wish to live. Moreover, because this is so, I wish others to live for generations and generations and generations and

generations."

Claire S says

Had heard of this, and formed an impression of this, based on other things I read in Women's Studies in the 80's. But for the first time picked up a copy at my daughter's school library, waiting for a meeting to start. I really like the tone of it.. Another Chicagoan! Looking forward to reading it all.

Her description of the way the ghetto-izing schools of Chicago intentionally robbed their students of an education, and the effect on her, is shocking. Also her description of her Dad's efforts to gain justice the 'right' way, and, again, the effects on her, hard to even imagine.

The format - part prose, part play - is jangling, but worth it of course.

It's sooo tragic how young she died (at age 34 in 1965)! All sixty-one of the artists who took place in the telling of 'Lorraine Hansberry in Her Own Words' to commemorate her on the second anniversary of her death, including Anne Bancroft, Lauren Bacall, Ralph Bellamy, Bette Davis, Ruby Dee, Colleen Dewhurst, Rita Moreno, Paul Robeson, Sidney Poitier, Maureen Stapleton, Rod Steiger and so many more - I'm even bigger fans of all of them.

Craig Cunningham says

Lorraine Hansberry was a brilliant playwright, author, and critic. It is very sad that she died so young. However, This brilliant account of her life, told in her own words, is a treasure. Many people do not even realize that her father's famous U.S. Supreme Court caseabolished the practice of restrictive covenants and the case still in which her retains the Hansberry name. Restrictive Covenants allowed for racial segregation in the purchase of real property, specifically residential property, and this became a theme of Ms. Hansberry's major play "Raisin in the Sun." I love this book

Shelley says

This book is a somewhat odd jumbled compilation of excerpts from Hansberry's plays and excerpts from her speeches and letters and essays, as well as an excellent introduction by James Baldwin.

If you have read nothing else of hers, this book gives you a sample of many of her different subjects and styles. I personally would recommend reading all her plays separately in full since the excerpts are a bit strange taken out of context and fragmented as they are.

Hansberry died too young to write a straightforward autobiography or memoir so her ex-husband put this book together as well as he could under the circumstances. I certainly would have edited it in a different way but I assume he had his reasons for doing it the way he did. There are pieces here that cannot be found anywhere else, so it's worth reading to find the gems mixed in.

Hansberry was an amazing woman who died young at age 34 and yet had written quite a few plays by that

time. She was a brilliant intellectual and her political opinions and activism made her a leader of the 1960's. I wish she was here today. We need her and James Baldwin more than ever....

jeremy says

sheeeet, i mean, if nina simone used the title for a song, you know it's gotta have weight. one of the most captivating, yet eloquent, voices in modern letters. it's tragic, not only to die of pancreatic cancer, but, too, that all the finest writer's works always end up becoming "as relevant today."

FreeFormLady says

Check out my quick review by clicking the link below
<https://youtu.be/pVtPbUMf5DM>

Ifeyinwa says

A very imperfect book that I plan to hold near and dear to my heart. It was tricky to get into, because it's a collection of her journal entries, letters, and her unfinished plays. It's somewhat incohesive as a whole, but it turned out to be a highly rewarding read! Apparently this was initially made for media on the second year anniversary of Hansberry's death, but was later turned into a book for posterity and access.

I just love having the letters and journal entries of a creative black woman on my nightstand, where she's ruthlessly honest about her insecurities, creative process, depression and her talent.

Unfortunately, there aren't a lot of these.

David says

I first saw the play on PBS in the 1970s when I was a graduate student at Atlanta University. I was blown away with it. This still is one of my favorite plays. Unfortunately, Lorraine's Hansberry's talented career was cut short by cancer. I am sure that Nina Simone had Hansberry and herself in mind when she sang: "To Be Young, Gifted and Black." Hansberry lives on through her works and her life serves as an inspiration to us all.

George says

ENGAGING, ENTERTAINING, ENLIGHTENING AND POIGNANT.

"For them that will do 'half' when 'all' is called for; for them that will slip and slide through life at the edge of their minds, never once pushing into the interior to see what wonders are hiding there—content to drift

along on whatever gets them by, ‘cheating’ themselves, ‘cheating’ the world, ‘cheating’ Nature! That is what “C” means, my dear child—”—page 44

“Eventually it comes to you: the thing that makes you exceptional, if you are at all, is inevitably that which must also make you lonely...”—page 137

Has it really been almost fifty-two years since ‘A Raisin in the Sun’ was first produced on the stage?

‘To Be Young, Gifted and Black: Lorraine Hansberry In Her Own Words,’ adapted by Robert Nemiroff, is a different reading experience. It is a montage of journals, letters, articles, talks, interviews, musings and creative output of a gifted and eloquent mind that somehow works to tell her story.

Recommendation: As much as I’m loath to leave my eReader on the shelf, ‘To Be Young, Gifted and Black’ is one dead-tree-book for which sacrificing the forest was worth it. It might, however, be dated material. I’m not sure whether or not Ms. Hansberry’s life, and times, and wisdom will resonate with today’s young and gifted. I’d hope that they might.

A word and a warning about the Vantage Book edition: Although it is of a nice, compact, size for carrying about; unless you have exceptionally good eyesight, and have an affinity for reading incredibly tiny, tiny, tiny print, I’d suggest you avoid this edition.

Some more quotes from the book:

“I wish to live because life has within it that which is good, that which is beautiful, and that which is love.”—page 11

“The only sinful people in the world were dull people.”—page 18

“...the world will go on thinking and doing as it wants regardless. Who’s counting. Who even cares?”—page 171

“In life, adequate respect must be paid to the tenacity of the absurd in both human and natural affairs.”—page 176

“The acceptance of our present condition is the only form of extremism which discredits us before our children.”—page 213

Vantage Books, A Division of Random House, hardcover edition, 261 pages

Cassidy says

3.5 STARS!!

After reading A Raisin in the Sun, I decided to check out this book from the library.

But, there were two major things I did not know about this book that affected my reading of it:

1. "To Be Young, Gifted and Black" is not a play written by Lorraine Hansberry.

2. The book was published posthumously.

What it IS, is a collection of Hansberry's letters, diary entries, interviews, play excerpts, artwork, and photographs. It is certainly challenging to weave all six elements and maintain an aesthetic and meaningful order. The book is a work of art in that way. I found myself anticipating the play sections just as much as the letters, photos, etc. And I appreciated the sections, which grouped sections of her life and stories into a topic.

It was not the play I expected, but it has made me even more interested in her other works besides *A Raisin in the Sun*, and I feel the same will happen to others who read it. This book is a great resource to anyone wanting to learn more about Hansberry, her life, her cause, and her work.

Esther says

In my honest opinion this book was very enlightening and should be sought out by many teenage African Americans. As a fourteen year old African American girl of present day America I can not say I can or ever will relate to everything she writes in this book, but reading this book I could find two handfuls of things important things that I relate to my life. Even if not African American this book would be a very good example of life as a whole. It was especially helpful to see life back then and through someone else's eyes

Sefu says

This book was good! Lorraine Hansberry was extremely wise beyond her years. I particularly liked her journal entries, interviews, diary entries & letters-- you could really see how authentic & transparent she was in her writing. She wrestled with writers block, low self esteem & loneliness, and I felt that this book did a great job of letting us see how she handled these things.

The only thing that I did NOT like, was the formatting! The book would go from journal entry, to a snippet of an interview to a snippet of a play to a snippet of another entry & so on and so forth. It was horrible formatting. I'm sure that Robert Neimroff had a reason for doing this, but it would've been nice to just devote a chapter to each aspect of her writing--- it just kept things neater & much less confusing.

Carrie says

James Baldwin's beautiful introduction alone is worth reading - warm, sincere, and very moving - but Hansberry absolutely sparkles throughout.
