

## Looking for Lorraine, Imani Perry:

### Chapter 1: Migration Song

- In what ways is Lorraine's life a story of migration?
- How did the political times that she grew up in, coming from her particular family background, help shape her outlook of the world?

### Chapter 2: From Heartland to the Water's Edge

- What do the artists, authors, and various other influences in Lorraine's life say about her?
- Because many of her influences were varied, racially and in terms of gender and nationality, can we still draw comparisons between her work and how those influences deal with issues of identity in their own work?

### Chapter 3: The Girl Who Can Do Everything

- How do Lorraine's political affiliations with the Communist Party play out in her life?
- How does her experience in Uruguay for the Inter-American Peace Conference shape her activism and artistic perspective?

### Chapter 4: Bobby

- Why was Lorraine's global approach to Black liberation unusual for her era?
- How do you read Lorraine's marriage to Bobby?

### Chapter 5: Sappho's Poetry

- "Critics write about Lorraine's sexuality in varying ways." (pg. 79) How do you feel about this conversation around her sexuality? Where do they stand on whether or not it is pertinent to a discussion of Lorraine's work as an artist?
- "This might seem like a fairly commonplace understanding today, because we associate the liberation of women generally with the liberation of desire and human connection..." (pg. 81) To what extent is this true? Was Lorraine an outlier of thought in her time, or is this question of separating liberation movements still important today?
- "Contradictions are a universal part of the human personality." (pg. 96) How do we see Lorraine's contradictions manifest? Are they all contradictions?

### Chapter 6: Raisin

- How did the reactions to the play reflect or contradict Lorraine's expressed ideas about identity, art, and politics?
- "We missed the essence of the work" (pg. 101) writes Amiri Baraka about *Raisin in the Sun*. Does the writer's intent matter in how we read and interpret her work?

- Is there any merit to the Black left's then dismissal of Lorraine and her play on the basis of her middle-class background? Do you think she was well positioned to write the play that she wrote?
- "She instructed them [the critics] that the real problem with *Raisin* was it lacked a central character who anchored the play." (pg. 106) Do you agree? Is there a problem with *Raisin* and, if so, what is it?
- "In the process, she criticized the critics who classified poetic drama (good) on one side and social drama its opposite." (pg. 108) What is the role of art? Is it to simply entertain us or to also ask bigger questions of us?

#### Chapter Seven: The Trinity

- How important are Lorraine's relationships with James Baldwin and Nina Simone to her work as an artist but also to her as a person?

#### Chapter 8: Of the Faith of Our Fathers

- "Parenthetically, I might say I haven't drawn a cent from the family since I came east nine years ago." (pg. 138) Does Hansberry giving up her financial inheritance change your perspective of her and her politics and work?
- "But she doesn't ventriloquize women, only men." (pg. 144) How do you read Lorraine's inclination towards writing male characters?

#### Chapter 9: American Radical

- What did it mean to Lorraine Hansberry to be a radical? "Though she was a radical in essays and letters, it was challenging for Lorraine to bring her radicalism to the American public in her art." (pg. 158) Does this statement make her any less radical in your view?
- And the solution to the struggle for racial justice was "to find some way with these dialogues to show and to encourage the white liberal to stop being a liberal and become an American radical." (pg. 172) Do you think that liberalism is not radical enough to bring about fundamental change in the US?
- "Lorraine rejected the American *project* but not America." (pg. 173) Is it possible to separate the two?
- How was Lorraine shaped by her broader sociopolitical context?

#### Chapter 10: The View from Chatterling Heights

- "Do I remain a revolutionary? Intellectually—without a doubt. But am I prepared to give my body to the struggle?" (pg. 180) Do you think that one needs to "give her body to the struggle" to be revolutionary?

#### Chapter 11: Homegoing

- “Lorraine, once dismissed as bourgeois, was embraced by the Black Power generation.” (pg. 197) What are some of the factors that may have brought this about?
- “There were always murmurs—murmurs about her sexuality, about her radicalism, about the work we’d never seen.” (pg. 198) How different would Lorraine’s legacy have looked had her private papers been released earlier?
- How did author Imani Perry’s connection with Lorraine Hansberry influence or affect your reading?