

InsideOUT

PRODUCED BY THE DENVER CENTER FOR THE PERFORMING ARTS

Denver Center
Theatre
KENT THOMPSON
ARTISTIC DIRECTOR
Company

FENCES
By AUGUST WILSON

FENCES

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InsideOUT

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Producing Partner: Tina Walls

Synopsis

BONO: Some people build fences to keep people out – and other people build fences to keep people in.
— Fences

Troy Maxson is a former baseball player, a strong athlete whose prowess on the field never received the recognition it deserved because he was in prison during his prime playing years. Now it is 1957 and Troy is 53 years old, a garbage collector whose dreams have been deferred and hopes deflected. He confides his frustrations to his friend, Jim Bono, but withholds them from Rose, his loving wife of 18 years. Troy takes great pride in providing for his family even when he sets barriers between himself and them – particularly his sons, Lyons and Cory. Troy’s rebellion and frustration set the tone for the play as he struggles for fairness in a society that seems to offer none. ■

THE PLAYWRIGHT: AUGUST WILSON

It's August's language – the rhythm of hurt, the rhythm of pain, the rhythm of ecstasy, the rhythm of family – which sets him apart and is why we call him the heavyweight champion.

— Lou Bellamy, director, ¹.

August Wilson was born in 1945 in the Hill District of Pittsburgh, the setting many of his plays. He is the product of a mixed marriage, but he says, “the culture I learned in my mother’s household was black.” ² As the only African American in his high school, young August’s efforts to learn were thwarted by racism, from ugly notes he found on his desk each morning to the beatings he tried to avoid each afternoon. Finally, when a teacher questioned the authenticity of a paper he wrote on Napoleon, he walked out of school at the age of 15. Every morning for the rest of the school year, he sat in the local library reading everything – sociology, anthropology, theology, fiction; he felt he’d found a brand new world.

When his mother Daisy discovered he was a dropout, she banished him to the basement. About the same time, when he bought a Bessie Smith record, he discovered the music of the blues; it was an epiphany for him. The music and lyrics became cemented in Wilson’s mind and every play he has written has been influenced by the notion of “finding a song.” ³

After a one-year stint in the United States army from 1962-63, Wilson returned to the Hill District and began to meet other black writers. With fellow playwright Rob Penney he formed the Black Horizon Theatre, hoping to raise consciousness through theatre. In 1976, Wilson saw a production of *Sizwe Bansi is Dead* by Athol Fugard, a white South African playwright and activist who used his plays to portray the injustice of South Africa’s racist apartheid system. Fugard crafted the political and social issues in clear, compelling language while also presenting powerful, unforgettable characters. Wilson began to see theatrical works as a way to inform as well as to entertain, to move an audience to action as well as to emotions. Wilson left the theatre inspired.

In 1978, he moved from Pittsburgh to St. Paul, Minnesota where his satire *Black Bart and the Sacred Hills* was produced. He also wrote children’s plays on science-related subjects for the Science Museum of Minnesota. Twice he submitted *Jitney* to the O’Neill Playwrights Conference in Connecticut and twice it was rejected. Wilson realized he could write a better play and turned his attention to one on blues singer Ma Rainey. In 1982, the Yale Repertory

Theatre accepted *Ma Rainey's Black Bottom* for a workshop, and thus began Wilson's relationship with director Lloyd Richards, then head of the Yale School of Drama.

With the success of *Ma Rainey* on Broadway, Wilson gave himself a mission: to continue to chronicle, decade by decade, the African-American story in the 20th century. *Gem of the Ocean*, written in 2004, is about the first ten years of the 20th Century. *Joe Turner's Come and Gone* is set in 1917 and revolves around the story of Harold Loomis who returns to a boarding house in Pittsburgh in search of his wife. He is haunted by the memory of a bounty hunter, Joe Turner, who had illegally enslaved him, and by his inability to embrace the past. *Ma Rainey's Black Bottom* (1920s) deals with a female blues singer who works in the pressure-cooker of an abusive music business that victimized its black artists. *The Piano Lesson* (1930s) concerns a battle over possession of a piano that carries the meaning of both legacy and opportunity and the choices the characters must make. *Seven Guitars*, set in the 1940s, shows the African American's plight after World War II. After fighting and dying for the country, black men return to confront the same inequities they faced before they left. *Fences* (1950-1965) revolves around Troy Maxson, a garbage collector, who takes great pride in keeping his family together and providing for them even as he sets barriers between himself and them. Troy's rebellion and frustration set the tone for the play as he struggles for fairness in a society that seems to offer none.

Two Trains Running (1960s) concerns the prospects for securing the American dream in a northern urban ghetto. Memphis Lee and the patrons of his restaurant stand on the precipice of urban renewal and must consider their prospects for survival and their loss of identity when the existence of their community is threatened. *Jitney* (1970s) revolves around the struggles of Pittsburgh gypsy cab drivers to retain their livelihood in the face of redevelopment and the difficulty of father-son relationships. Both *Fences* and *The Piano Lesson* won Pulitzer Prizes and Wilson's success helped bring down barriers for other black artists.

Mr. Wilson received many fellowships and awards in addition to his Pulitzer Prizes. He was awarded Rockefeller and Guggenheim fellowships in Playwriting, the Heinz Award in 2003 and a National Humanities Medal by the President of the United States in 1999. In addition to numerous honorary degrees from colleges and universities, he received the only high school diploma ever issued by the Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh. In 1991 Wilson moved to Seattle after a divorce. It was as far away from New York as he could go in the United States and still write. He didn't know anyone in Seattle and in an interview in 1993, said: "I still don't know anyone in Seattle. That's fine with me."⁴

In 1995, Wilson broke with his mentor, Lloyd Richards and chose Marion McClinton to direct *Jitney* for the Pittsburgh Public

Theatre. McClinton had done many inventive second productions of Wilson's earlier plays. McClinton also directed Wilson's work about the 1980s, *King Hedley II*. Recently out of jail, King struggles to make a living selling refrigerators with his friend, Mister. To get the money to open their own video business, they decide to burglarize a jewelry store. King's mother, Ruby, is reintroduced from *Seven Guitars* and is now living with him and his wife Tonya. They worry about King's illegal activities and Tonya fears bringing a child into the world when King may end up in jail or dead.

In 2005 Wilson completed his cycle of plays with *Radio Golf*, set in the 1990s, which concerns an inner-city redevelopment plan. Its message is more socially overt; as Wilson says it is about "the failure of the black middle class to return their expertise, participation and resources back to the community."⁴ In April 2005, Wilson learned he was suffering from inoperable liver cancer. He died on October 2, 2005 in Seattle, Washington, survived by two daughters, Sakina Ansari and Azula Carmen and his wife, costume designer Constanza Romero. On October 16, 2005 Broadway renamed the Virginia Theatre at 245 West 52nd Street The August Wilson Theatre. "We got to be united and come together before we can proceed on, into this 21st century."⁵ ■

1. Lahr, p. 50.

2. Lahr, p. 50.

3. Lahr, p. 59.

4. Shannon, interview.

5. Zoglin, p. 66.

Herrington, Jean. *I Ain't Sorry for Nothin' I Done: August Wilson's Process of Playwriting*. New York: Limelight Editions, 1998.

Heinsman, Aaron and Lichtenstein, Steve, eds. *Study Guide for Radio Golf*. Center Stage Theatre. Baltimore, MD: 2006.

<http://www.kinghedley.com/studyguide/printerversion.html>

Lahr, John. "Been There and Gone." *The New Yorker*. August 16, 2001.

Shannon, Sandra G. "Blues, History and Dramaturgy: an Interview with August Wilson." *African American Review*. Winter, 1993.

Zoglin, Richard. "100 Years in One Life." *Time Magazine*. May 2, 2005.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF “THE HILL”

Everything was happening on the hill – it was jammin’ on the Hill.
— Shirley Anderson, owner of the Beauty Mark Salon.

Fences is set in the Hill district of Pittsburgh in 1957. The Hill district began on “farm number three,” a piece of land owned by William Penn’s grandson and later sold to General Adamson Tannerhill, a Revolutionary War veteran, for \$20 an acre. In the late 1840s, Thomas Mellon bought a tract of farmland on the slope nearest the city. He subdivided the tract into smaller plots and sold them for a tidy profit. Thus began the Hill’s development as a settled community.

The Hill is actually composed of several smaller hills, which at the time were inhabited by three communities. Haiti was on the lower hill, settled by runaway slaves; the middle portion was called Lacyville, while the upper hill was called Minersville. The latter two areas were populated predominately by Germans and Scotch-Irish until the 1880s when central and eastern Europeans began to settle there.

African Americans began arriving from the South between 1880 and 1910. During the years leading to World War I, blacks were urged to come by industry recruiters who promised relief from the segregation laws of the South. New arrivals swelled the area and the Hill became an ethnic and racial melting pot of Russians, Slovaks, Armenians, Syrians, Lebanese, Greeks, Poles, Chinese and Jews. The various ethnic groups wove a rich and vibrant tapestry for Pittsburgh city life. Hill District residents supplied the labor for mines, mills, business and government. They toiled, raised their children and contended with each other while establishing a community that left an indelible mark upon Pittsburgh’s religion, politics and economy.

The ethnic diversity of the Hill produced a bustling business community. Wylie and Bedford Avenues and Logan Street were lined with neighborhood stores. Their vibrancy lasted through the hard times of the Depression. Through these difficult times the Hill remained a place for music. The Hill was known on the National Jazz Circuit with places like the Crawford Grill, Hurricane Lounge, Savoy Ballroom and Musicians Club. Celebrities such as Rudy Vallee and Paul Whiteman came to the Hill after performing at downtown theatres and clubs to hear black musicians play. In the 1940s and 50s the Hill was brimming with interracial bars and clubs where black musicians like Ramsey Lewis, Oscar Peterson, Cannonball Adderly, Billy

Eckstine and Lena Horne entertained nightclub patrons. In the 1930s the Hill also became known for its Negro League baseball team, the Pittsburgh Crawfords, and *The Pittsburgh Courier*, one of the country's leading African American newspapers.

Although the Hill District continued to be a vibrant, politically active community, a deteriorating neighborhood infrastructure began to take hold. In 1943, George E. Evans, a member of city council, wrote that "approximately 90 per cent of the buildings in the area are sub-standard, and have long outlived their usefulness, and so there would be no social loss if these were all destroyed."¹ Local residents, however, suspected that the officials were using this as an excuse to create a "neutral zone" between the city's black and white areas.

In September 1955 the federal government approved the lower Hill redevelopment plan, making available \$17.4 million in loans and grants. Ninety-five acres were slated for clearing, with the demolition of the first of 1,300 structures to be razed set for June 1956. Redevelopment displaced more than 8,000 residents; 1,239 black families, 312 white. Of these, 35% went to public housing, 31% to private rentals and 8% bought homes. About 90 families refused to move and ended up in substandard housing.

In 1968 the Hill's fortunes took another blow and struck bottom during the riots following the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King. The riots began on April 5 and lasted until April 12, 1968. That week of rage saw 505 fires, \$620,000 in property damage, one death and 926 arrests. This violence heightened the decline of the already struggling Hill district. As the neighborhood continued to deteriorate, it became a haven for drug dealers and the population waned even more. The demise of the steel industry in the late 1970s and 80s did nothing to help the Hill regain its footing. By the 1990s, only 5,419 residents remained on the Middle and Upper Hill.

The Hill District's rich legacy has been leveled by botched redevelopments and riots, but black Pittsburghers met and transcended these problems and are striving to rebuild; that gives confidence that the Hill District will be revitalized. Crawford Square has returned residential homes to the area, with plans for retail developments and the restoration of the New Granada Theatre as a jazz center. Carl Redwood of the One Hill Coalition says, "The Hill District community feels it knows best how to move forward with its neighborhood development."² ■

1. Korol, p. 2.

2. Pittsburgh History and Landmarks Foundation.

Heinsman, Aaron and Lichtenstein, Steve, eds. *Study Guide for Radio Golf*. Center Stage Theatre. Baltimore MD: 2006.

[http://www.phif.org/2008/Pittsburgh History and Landmark Foundation](http://www.phif.org/2008/Pittsburgh%20History%20and%20Landmark%20Foundation).

Korol, Paul S. "A Brief History of the Hill." *Pittsburgh Senior News*. <http://freepages.genealogy.rootsweb.com/~njm1/hillhist.htm>

THE THEMES IN FENCES

TROY: You got to take the crooked with the straights.

— Fences

Fences explores the theme of responsibility in family life. Troy Maxson assumes the responsibilities of father, husband and provider who looks after his family as well as his disabled brother, Gabriel. However, he hides his frustrations, confiding them only to his friend, Jim Bono. Overwhelmed by these demands, Troy shirks his responsibilities, seeking escape with a younger woman, and fathering a child with her. When he brings the baby home, his explanation to his wife Rose is: “I can step out of this house and get away from the pressures and problems – be a different man.” In the end “it is the responsibility each member of the family feels toward the others that brings resolution to the story.”¹

Another theme is the limitations and opportunities offered to Troy. He was a competent baseball player who developed his talent while in prison for fifteen years for killing a man during a robbery. When he is released from prison, he is too old to play in the major leagues. However, Troy refuses to acknowledge that his actions led to his prison time; instead he blames the system that discriminates against black players. Troy is blind to any changes that have occurred in the last 15 years. He refuses to recognize that time has passed and major leagues are now signing African-American players.

When his son Cory is recruited for an athletic scholarship, Troy forbids his son from playing football. Bitter over his own lack of advancement, Troy holds his son back from any success he might achieve. Cory accuses him of this fact when he explodes: “Just ’cause you didn’t have a chance, you just scared I’m gonna be better than you, that’s all.”

Death is a character that Troy battles. He wrestled with Death when he had pneumonia; he finishes the fence around his house when he feels threatened by Death. His own name, Troy, is a metaphor for the defensive wall erected against the Athenians in the Trojan War. He refers to Death as “a fast ball on the outside corner.”

Kim Pereira, in his book *August Wilson and the African American Odyssey*, argues that separation is a theme.³ He gives these examples: Bono’s father left the family; Troy’s mother left; Troy left home because he became his father’s competitor and Troy separated from his new family when he went to prison. In the play

we see Cory leave home because he feels his father has denied him an opportunity; Troy's promotion to driver separates him from his friend, Bono; and finally, after Troy's affair, Rose declares him "a womanless man."

The most potent symbol of separation in the play is the fence that surrounds the Maxson family's yard. Rose wants the fence to keep her loved ones safe; Troy builds the fence to keep intruders and Death out. When Troy played baseball, he always aimed to hit the ball over the fence, while he saw white America as having built a fence that kept blacks contained. In addition, Troy built a fence around Cory to restrain him from achieving his goals and desires.

Race and racism of course are prominent themes as well. The play takes place in 1957 at the cusp of the Civil Rights movement of the 1960s. Even though he is too old to play baseball when released from prison, Troy feels racism derailed his sports career. ■

1. Galens, ed. p. 185.
2. Timpane in Nadel, p. 73.
3. Pereira, p. 38.

Bigsby, Christopher, ed. *The Cambridge Companion to August Wilson*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2007.

Roudane, Matthew. "Safe at Home? August Wilson's Fences."

Galens, David, ed. *Fences: Drama for Students*. Farmington Hills, MI: The Gale Group, 2002.

Nadel, Alan, ed. *May All Your Fences Have Gates*. Iowa City, Iowa: University of Iowa Press, 1994.

Timpane, John. "Filling the Time: Reading History in the Drama of August Wilson."

Pereira, Kim. *August Wilson and the African-American Odyssey*. Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1995.

FATHER-SON RELATIONSHIPS

TROY: I'm the boss – you understand? I'm the boss around here. I do the only saying what counts. — Fences

Power issues lead to conflict in most father-son relationships. When two people are struggling for stature, the situation can be troublesome: sons often begin challenging the father in charge. When Troy prevents Cory from playing football, the son reacts angrily to his father's decision.

Expectations can lead to father-son conflict as well. Most fathers want their sons to succeed, but Troy feels Cory should just get a job and live with unfulfilled dreams as he has. Because of his father's lowered expectations, Cory is denied access to his own desires and this results in a conflict. Cory wants a sports career, but Troy is adamant that Cory take on a conventional, steady job, thus holding his son's hopes back.

Troy and Cory also experience a generation gap. Troy will live his life based on his own past experience, blind to the changes in technology, sports, etc. He will treat his son as he was treated by his father, and never accept the ways of a new generation. ■

<http://www.psychologytoday.com/articles/200910/father-and-sons?page=2>

http://www.dr-michael-j-diamond.com/nr_faqs.html

http://www.boldsky.com/health/disorder-cure/2010/father-and-son_relationship-02110.html

AMERICA IN THE 1950s

BONO: Times have changed, Troy. You just come along too early.

— Fences

One of the characteristics of the 1950s was the strong element of conservatism and anti-communist feeling that ran through society. This was the decade during which the phrase “under God” was added to the Pledge of Allegiance, and church attendance rose.

Some important historic and cultural events of the decade were:

1950 – President Harry Truman approved the production of a hydrogen bomb and sent the Air Force and Navy to Korea in June.

1951 – Transcontinental TV began.

1952 – Immigration and Naturalization Act of 1952 removed racial and ethnic barriers to becoming a United States citizen.

1953-1961 – Dwight D. Eisenhower served as President.

1953 – Julius and Ethel Rosenberg were electrocuted for their part in a World War II act of espionage.

1954 – United States Senator Joe McCarthy began televised hearings into alleged Communists in the Army.

1954 – The Supreme Court wrote in *Brown versus the Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas*, that separate facilities for blacks did not make those facilities equal according to the Constitution. Integration began across the nation.

1955 – Fighting ended in Korea.

1955 – Dr. Jonas Salk developed a vaccine for polio.

1955 – Rosa Parks refused to give up her seat on a public bus in Montgomery, Alabama.

1957 – Violence occurred at Central High School in Little Rock, Arkansas, as black students tried to enroll.

1957 – The Soviet Union launched Sputnik I, the first artificial satellite to orbit the earth.

1958 – Explorer I, first US satellite, successfully orbited the earth.

1958 – First domestic airline passenger service was begun by National Airlines between New York City and Miami.

1959 – Alaska and Hawaii became the 49th and 50th states in the United States.

In the 1950s African Americans artists John T. Biggers, Romare Beardon and Henry Clay Anderson presented a different view of American life. In the field of literature, Lorraine Hansberry wrote *A Raisin in the Sun* in 1959; Langston Hughes was represented by his poetry in *Laughing to Keep from Crying* (1952), and in 1953 James Baldwin wrote *Go Tell It on the Mountain*, a semi-autobiographical novel.

On television people were watching the “Ozzie and Harriet Show”, the “Ed Sullivan Show”, Edward R. Murrow’s “See It Now” and Dick Clark’s “American Bandstand.” Rock ‘n’ roll emerged as a blend of Southern blues and gospel music. Bill Haley and the Comets, Elvis Presley and Jerry Lee Lewis ruled the pop charts. But some individuals preferred to listen to such crooners as Nat King Cole, Frank Sinatra and Perry Como.

In sports Althea Gibson was the first African American woman to play in the US Lawn Tennis Nationals at Forest Hills, New York. Jackie Robinson, Roy Campanella and Hank Aaron were burning up the bases in baseball, while Wilt Chamberlain and Elgin Baylor shone on the basketball court.

In fashion, blue jeans and poodle skirts were popular. Girls put their hair in ponytails and boys preferred crew cuts. ■

<http://KCLibrary.lonestar.edu/decade 50.html>

AFRICAN AMERICANS IN BASEBALL

*BONO: Ain't but two men ever played baseball as good as you.
That's Babe Ruth and Josh Gibson. Them's the only two men ever
hit more runs than you.*
— Fences

The African American baseball leagues were founded in 1920 in Kansas City. The first league was established by Rube Foster who molded the Chicago American Giants. Black teams flourished in Harlem, Chicago's South Side, Pittsburgh, Kansas City, New York, Philadelphia, Newark, Baltimore, Memphis, Jacksonville, Atlanta and Birmingham. These baseball teams were the largest black businesses in the United States before integration. They trained such players as Willie Mays, Jackie Robinson, Hank Aaron, Monte Irwin, Roy Campanella and Don Newcombe. The first Negro World Series was played in 1924.

The Great Depression and lack of sustained leadership dampened the interest in Negro League baseball. However, Cumberland Posey and his Baltimore Homestead Grays and Gus Greenlee, a numbers runner and racketeer, helped revive the game in 1933. Greenlee even obtained the fabled pitcher, Satchel Paige. During World War II, the Negro Baseball Teams entered their flush period.

However, African American players experienced many difficulties and indignities. They played every day of the season and had to stay in black hotels or rooming houses. Since there were no restaurants that would serve black individuals, they subsisted on cold cuts and cold drinks. The Kansas City Monarchs found this situation so deplorable that they resorted to camping out with tents, cots and cooking gear. The players could adjust to the hardships of travel, but not to the severe standards of segregation. For example, Satchel Paige refused to play in towns where he was denied food and lodging. The players determined that Northern New England, Canada and Cuba were their favorite places to play.

The Midwestern Baseball Tournaments began in 1935 when the *Denver Post* sponsored a semi-pro event with a first prize of \$7,500. In 1934 the members of the leagues invited the Negro League's Kansas City Monarchs to the tournament; this act was considered "the most significant announcement of a decade insofar as Negro baseball was concerned."¹

The second major Midwestern Baseball Tournament took place in Wichita, Kansas in 1935. The black players were superior to the white teams and were cheered by white crowds who were thrilled by their prowess.

But the Negro League's proudest moment was the integration of the sport of baseball. In 1947 Jackie Robinson was selected by Branch Rickey, general manager of the Brooklyn Dodgers, to integrate the game. Baseball's integration was of great importance and paved the way for the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s. ■

1. Rogosin, p. 137.

Rogosin, Donn. *Invisible Men: Life in Baseball's Negro Leagues*. New York: Atheneum, 1983.

http://www.wikipedia.org/wiki/negro_league_baseball

<http://www.nibpa.com/history.html>

STORYTELLING

BONO: You got more stories than the devil got sinners.
— Fences

Personal reminiscences and storytelling are integral to August Wilson’s plays. In *Fences*, for example, Troy and Bono engage in a daily ritual of joking, arguing and shooting the breeze.

Storytelling, as a particular form of black expression, derives from the “griot,” an African tribal elder who was immersed in oral storytelling and “responsible for maintaining tribal history.”¹ Traditionally, Africans have revered good stories and storytellers, as have most cultures around the world that are rooted in oral traditions. Most of the stories are verbally performed accompanied by dance and music. The stories are an affirmation of personal and collective experience.

All of these tales are enhanced by the manner of performance; “the oral inventiveness of good storytelling [is] a source of delight and stimulation to their audiences.”² The most gifted of storytellers do not memorize or repeat the same story in the same way each time. Griots alternate between set text and improvisation, creating, embellishing and adapting to the needs and interests of the audience. ■

1. asjournal.zusas.uni-halle

2. Pereira, p.11.

<http://asjournal.zusas.uni-halle.de/212.html>

Pereira, Kim. *August Wilson and the African-American Odyssey*. Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1995.

<http://web.cocc.edu/cagatucci/classes/hum211/afrstory.htm>

CONNECT

A series of free discussions providing a catalyst for discussion, learning and appreciation of the productions

Perspectives - Denver Center Theatre Company's own "Creative Team" and community experts host interactive, topical discussions with attendees that provide a unique perspective on the production. This provides an in-depth connection that makes the stage experience even more rewarding.

9/14, 6pm, Jones Theatre

Higher Education Advisory Discussions - Audience members gain scholarly insight into the productions through discussions, facilitated by faculty members from regional colleges and universities.

9/23, Post-show

DCTC@The TC: The Art of Making Art – Discover the secrets behind the art and the artist at the DCTC. Gain deeper insight into the artist's journey in the creation and development of their work. Gregory Smith, Director of Audience Development for the Denver Center for the Performing arts, hosts these lively and engaging discussions with directors, writers or cast members of the current DCTC productions.

9/25, second floor of the Tattered Cover LoDo (1628 16th St.)

Talkbacks - Perhaps the best way to fully appreciate a production is by engaging in a stimulating dialogue with your fellow audience members and the actors who bring it to life.

9/27 and 9/30, Post-show

In Conversation: Engage, Experience, Reflect – Engage in a pre-show dialogue with local and regional authorities about the themes and issues of the current production. Share in the experience of watching the matinee performance. Reflect upon the performance, sharing your perspective, in a post-show setting

9/29, 11am, Jones Theatre

Theatre & Theology - In our continued partnership with Pastor Dan Bollman of the Rocky Mountain Evangelical Lutheran Synod and cast members, this discussion examines the relevant connections to the productions through a theological lens.

10/2, Post-show

QUESTIONS

PRE-PERFORMANCE QUESTIONS

1. What analogies do you use to describe your everyday life? Why do analogies help in describing complex subjects?
2. What is a role of a parent toward their children?

POST-PERFORMANCE QUESTIONS

1. What does a fence symbolize in this play? What other analogies are used in this play?
2. How does the setting of 1950s Pittsburgh inform the play? What changes would happen if the story took place earlier or later? How would the story change if it was set in Denver in the 1950s?
3. What qualities does a hero have? What qualities does a villain have? Would you describe Troy as a hero or a villain?
4. How would you describe the relationship between Troy Maxson and his sons? His brother? His friends? His wives?
5. How does Troy's fear of death and dying manifest itself in the play? How does he cope with it?
6. How would you describe Rose? How does she react to the confession from Troy? How would you have reacted to this information?
7. Why does Troy want Cory to drop football and get a job?
8. How does Lyons describe his love of music?
8. How would you describe the character Gabriel? What purpose does he serve for the play?
8. What surprises happen at the end of the play?

ACTIVITIES

COLUMBIAN HYPNOSIS

1. Pair students up standing two feet from each other. Student A places the palm of his/her hand six to eight inches from Student B's face. **THE STUDENTS ARE NOT TO TOUCH AT ANY TIME** and the exercise should be performed in total silence. The students are to pretend that a string runs from the palm of Student A to the nose of Student B.
2. Student A explores the space with his/her palm by moving it back and forth or up and down and around and Student B must follow so that the imaginary string will not break. Start by having students mirror each other but then encourage movement in the space without collisions. Have Student A manipulate Student B into shapes and images while maintain Student B's safety.
3. After the initial exploration, switch positions. Student B now leads Student A.
4. **Discussion Questions:** How did it make you feel when you were the person leading or the person following? What do you think would happen if you add another person and had to follow and lead at the same time? Where are some of the places that we see a power struggle take place in *Fences*? Where else do we see a power dynamic?

History PG: Analyze and practice rights, roles and responsibilities of citizens.

History PG: Analyze the origins, structure, and functions of governments and their impacts on societies and citizens.

PERSPECTIVE WRITING – PERSONAL NARRATIVES

1. Select a moment from a typical day at your school; right before the morning bell rings, the morning announcements, a school wide assembly, the cafeteria at lunch, the final bell, a football game, etc. This should be a moment that has more than one person in attendance.
2. Each person will write a short monologue in first person tense describing the moment from their perspective of the experience. Make sure the moment is appropriate for school and that you are willing to share with the rest of the class.
3. Select one of the monologues that has the most potential or detail to be the scaffolding for the rest of the class to add elements from their monologues to make it richer or more evocative.
4. Discuss the similarities and differences that arose during the process. Was there general agreement or marked differences? If they

were different why? Were they subtle or obvious variations? Did the class agree on what was important to include and why? If not how would the elimination of some elements change the way the story would be understood when read?

Writing PG: Articulate the position of self and others using experiential and material logic.

Writing PG: Write with clear focus, coherent organization, sufficient elaboration, and detail.

PERSPECTIVE WRITING – EULOGY

1. An eulogy is a speech or writing that praises a person that has recently died. Eulogies should not be confused with elegies, which are poems written in tribute to the dead; nor with obituaries, which are more similar to biographies.
2. After seeing the play, write an eulogy for Troy Maxson from your perspective.
3. Write a second eulogy for Troy Maxson from the perspective of Rose, Lyons, Cory or Bono.
4. Read and compare the eulogies in class. Discuss what information was important from the student's perspective? What information was important when writing from another character's perspective? What information did they leave out? Were there subtle or blatant differences from the different characters?

Writing PG: Articulate the position of self and others using experiential and material logic.

REPRESENTATIVE OBJECTS

1. Goal: The objective of this exercise is to give students a perspective of their pasts by using representative historical objects.
2. August Wilson's plays are full of symbolism. In *Fences*, there are many objects that become symbols. Start with compiling a list of objects that are found in the play and what they may represent. What do the objects tell us about the owner and how do the other characters react to these objects?
3. Have the class brainstorm some objects that they possess or remember from their past. How do these objects help to represent them?
4. Ask the students to talk with their parents and grandparents about some of the objects from their past.
5. Pick one of these objects and write a paragraph or compose a poem that is about the symbolic nature of these objects.

Writing PG: Articulate the position of self and others using experiential and material logic.