

august wilson fences full play

august wilson fences full play is a landmark work in American theater, penned by the acclaimed playwright August Wilson. This play forms part of Wilson's Pittsburgh Cycle, a series that explores the African American experience across different decades. **Fences** delves deeply into themes of race, family, dreams, and personal struggle, set against the backdrop of 1950s Pittsburgh. The full text of the play offers insight into the complex relationships and societal pressures faced by its characters, particularly focusing on the protagonist Troy Maxson. This article provides a comprehensive overview of **august wilson fences full play**, exploring its plot, characters, themes, and cultural significance. Additionally, the analysis will include notable productions and adaptations that have contributed to its enduring legacy.

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Overview of **august wilson fences full play**

August Wilson's **Fences** is a dramatic play that premiered in 1985 and quickly became one of the most significant works in contemporary American theater. The full play is set primarily in the 1950s and revolves around the life of Troy Maxson, a former Negro League baseball player who now works as a garbage collector. The narrative explores Troy's struggles with racial discrimination, family conflicts, and unfulfilled dreams. Wilson's writing style in **Fences** is notable for its naturalistic dialogue and rich character development. The play is the sixth installment of Wilson's ten-play Pittsburgh Cycle, which collectively paints a vivid portrait of African American life throughout the twentieth century. Understanding the full play allows readers and audiences to appreciate the depth of Wilson's storytelling and the societal critiques embedded within.

Main Characters and Their Roles

The characters in August Wilson's *Fences* are carefully crafted to embody the complexities of family dynamics, societal pressures, and personal ambitions. Each character plays a crucial role in advancing the plot and highlighting the central themes.

Troy Maxson

Troy is the protagonist of the play, a strong-willed and often stubborn man grappling with past disappointments and present responsibilities. His character embodies the tension between generational aspirations and limitations imposed by racial inequality.

Rose Maxson

Rose, Troy's wife, represents loyalty, strength, and the sustaining force within the Maxson household. Her character provides a counterbalance to Troy's flaws and offers insight into the sacrifices made by many African American women during the era.

Cory Maxson

Cory, Troy and Rose's son, symbolizes the new generation striving for opportunities that Troy was denied. His conflict with Troy over his future and ambitions forms a central element of the play's dramatic tension.

Supporting Characters

The play also features other important figures such as Gabriel Maxson, Troy's brother, whose character adds layers of symbolism and poignancy, and Bono, Troy's friend, who serves as a voice of reason and camaraderie.

- Troy Maxson – protagonist, former baseball player
- Rose Maxson – Troy's wife
- Cory Maxson – Troy and Rose's son
- Gabriel Maxson – Troy's brother
- Bono – Troy's friend and coworker

Plot Summary and Structure

August Wilson's *Fences* full play unfolds over the course of approximately a year, primarily taking place in the Maxson family's backyard. The structure is divided into two acts, each highlighting pivotal moments in the characters' lives.

Act One

The first act introduces the audience to Troy's world and his strained relationships, particularly with his son Cory. Troy's past as a baseball player and his current job are explored, alongside his growing discontent and the revelation of his infidelity. The act builds tension through family arguments and Troy's efforts to assert control over his household.

Act Two

The second act delves deeper into the consequences of Troy's choices, including the impact of his betrayal on his marriage and family. The themes of forgiveness, responsibility, and legacy come to the forefront. The play concludes by addressing how the family copes with Troy's death and the future that lies ahead for each character.

Key Plot Points

- Troy's confrontation with racial barriers in professional sports
- His extramarital affair and its repercussions
- Father-son conflict between Troy and Cory
- Rose's response to family challenges
- Troy's eventual death and family's reconciliation

Themes and Symbolism in *Fences*

August Wilson's *Fences* full play is rich with themes that resonate universally while rooted in the specific African American experience. The play's symbolism enhances the exploration of these themes.

Race and Discrimination

A central theme of *Fences* is the systemic racial discrimination that limits the opportunities available to Troy and his family. The play examines how racial barriers affect dreams, career prospects, and personal identity.

Family and Responsibility

The play highlights the complexities of family loyalty and duty. Troy's role as a husband and father is fraught with conflict, illustrating the challenges of maintaining familial bonds amid personal failings.

Dreams and Limitations

Troy's thwarted ambitions and his son Cory's conflicting aspirations symbolize the generational struggle between accepting limitations and striving for progress.

Symbolism of the Fence

The fence that Troy builds around his home serves as a powerful metaphor. It represents both protection and restriction, symbolizing the boundaries imposed by societal forces and personal choices.

- Fence as a symbol of protection and division
- Baseball as a metaphor for racial exclusion
- Gabriel's injury symbolizing the cost of war and trauma
- Music and storytelling reflecting cultural heritage

Historical and Cultural Context

Understanding the historical and cultural context of August Wilson's *Fences* enhances appreciation of its themes and characters. The play is set in the 1950s, a period marked by racial segregation and the early civil rights movement.

Post-World War II America

The aftermath of World War II brought changes and challenges for African American communities. Many veterans, like Gabriel in the play, returned home with physical and psychological scars. Economic opportunities were limited by pervasive racism.

The Great Migration

The setting of Pittsburgh reflects the broader trend of the Great Migration, where African Americans moved from the rural South to northern cities seeking better jobs and living conditions. This migration shaped the social landscape portrayed in the play.

Segregation and Civil Rights

Fences captures the tension of a segregated society on the cusp of change. Troy's experiences highlight the persistent barriers despite the promise of post-war prosperity, illustrating the slow progress toward racial equality.

Notable Productions and Adaptations

The enduring popularity of August Wilson's Fences full play is evident in its numerous acclaimed productions and adaptations. These have brought Wilson's work to wider audiences and cemented its place in theatrical history.

Original Broadway Production

Fences premiered on Broadway in 1987, starring James Earl Jones as Troy Maxson. The production won the Pulitzer Prize for Drama and several Tony Awards, including Best Play, establishing Wilson's reputation as a leading playwright.

Film Adaptation

In 2016, Fences was adapted into a major motion picture directed by and starring Denzel Washington alongside Viola Davis as Rose. The film received critical acclaim and multiple Academy Award nominations, further elevating the play's prominence.

Subsequent Stage Productions

Many theater companies across the United States and internationally have

staged *Fences*, often featuring renowned actors. These productions continue to explore the play's relevance and emotional depth for new audiences.

- 1987 Broadway premiere with James Earl Jones
- 2010 Broadway revival featuring Denzel Washington
- 2016 film adaptation directed by Denzel Washington
- Regional and international theater productions

Impact and Legacy of the Play

August Wilson's *Fences* full play remains a seminal work that has significantly influenced American theater and cultural discourse. Its impact extends beyond the stage, contributing to conversations about race, family, and identity.

Contribution to African American Literature

Fences is a cornerstone of African American dramatic literature, providing a nuanced portrayal of black life and history. It has inspired generations of playwrights and scholars to explore similar themes.

Educational Significance

The play is widely studied in academic settings for its literary merit and social commentary. Its accessibility and depth make it a valuable resource for understanding mid-twentieth-century African American experiences.

Cultural Resonance

Fences continues to resonate with audiences due to its universal themes of struggle, hope, and resilience. Its legacy endures through ongoing performances, adaptations, and scholarly analysis.

Frequently Asked Questions

What is the full play 'Fences' by August Wilson

about?

'Fences' is a play by August Wilson that explores the struggles of an African American family in the 1950s, focusing on Troy Maxson, a former baseball player turned garbage collector, as he deals with issues of race, family, and personal dreams.

Where can I find the full text of August Wilson's 'Fences' play?

The full text of 'Fences' is available for purchase through various bookstores and online retailers. Some educational institutions may provide access through their libraries, but it is not typically available for free online due to copyright restrictions.

What are the main themes in August Wilson's 'Fences'?

The main themes include racial discrimination, family dynamics, generational conflict, the pursuit of dreams, and the impact of the past on the present.

Who are the key characters in 'Fences' by August Wilson?

The key characters include Troy Maxson, the protagonist; Rose Maxson, his wife; Cory Maxson, their son; Lyons, Troy's son from a previous relationship; and Gabriel, Troy's brother.

Has 'Fences' been adapted into a film or other media?

Yes, 'Fences' was adapted into a critically acclaimed film in 2016, directed by and starring Denzel Washington, with Viola Davis playing Rose Maxson.

What is the significance of the fence in August Wilson's play 'Fences'?

The fence symbolizes protection, boundaries, and the barriers in relationships, especially within the Maxson family. It represents both physical and emotional divisions.

When was 'Fences' by August Wilson first performed?

'Fences' was first performed in 1985 and later won the Pulitzer Prize for Drama in 1987.

How does August Wilson's 'Fences' reflect the African American experience?

The play reflects the African American experience by addressing systemic racism, economic hardship, and the struggle for identity and dignity during the 1950s, portraying the complexities of African American family life and societal challenges.

Additional Resources

1. *Fences* by August Wilson

This is the full play that explores the life of Troy Maxson, a former Negro League baseball player who struggles with the racial discrimination of the 1950s while trying to provide for his family. The play delves into themes of race, family, and personal dreams versus reality. It is a powerful portrayal of African American life in the mid-20th century.

2. *The Piano Lesson* by August Wilson

Another important work by August Wilson, this play centers on the conflict between a brother and sister over a family heirloom piano. Set in the 1930s, it explores themes of legacy, memory, and the struggles of African American families. Like *Fences*, it is part of Wilson's Pittsburgh Cycle, focusing on Black life in different decades.

3. *August Wilson's Pittsburgh Cycle: A Reader's Guide*

This guide provides an in-depth analysis of all ten plays in August Wilson's Pittsburgh Cycle, including *Fences*. It offers background information, thematic explorations, and character studies to help readers understand the cultural and historical context of Wilson's work. It is an essential resource for students and scholars.

4. *Race and Identity in August Wilson's Fences*

This critical essay collection examines how August Wilson addresses issues of race, identity, and systemic oppression in *Fences*. The essays analyze Troy Maxson's character and his interactions within the family and society. It highlights the play's significance in American theater and African American literature.

5. *Family Dynamics and Conflict in Fences*

This book explores the complex relationships within the Maxson family, focusing on themes of fatherhood, loyalty, and betrayal. It discusses how Wilson uses family drama to reflect broader social issues. Readers gain insight into the emotional depth and psychological realism of the characters.

6. *August Wilson: The Ground on Which I Stand*

A biography of August Wilson that delves into his life, influences, and creative process. The book traces Wilson's journey from his childhood in Pittsburgh to becoming a celebrated playwright. It also highlights how his experiences shaped plays like *Fences*.

7. *Staging Fences: Performance and Interpretation*

This book analyzes various productions of *Fences*, examining directorial choices, acting interpretations, and set design. It discusses how different performances bring out diverse facets of the play's themes. It is useful for theater practitioners and enthusiasts interested in the play's staging history.

8. *August Wilson and the African American Experience*

This scholarly work situates *Fences* within the broader context of African American history and culture. It discusses how Wilson's plays reflect the struggles and triumphs of Black Americans across the 20th century. The book provides cultural and historical insights that deepen understanding of Wilson's work.

9. *Contemporary American Drama: Voices of the 20th Century*

A comprehensive anthology that includes *Fences* alongside other significant American plays. It offers critical essays and contextual background on the development of modern American theater. Readers can compare Wilson's work with that of his contemporaries and appreciate its place in the dramatic canon.

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