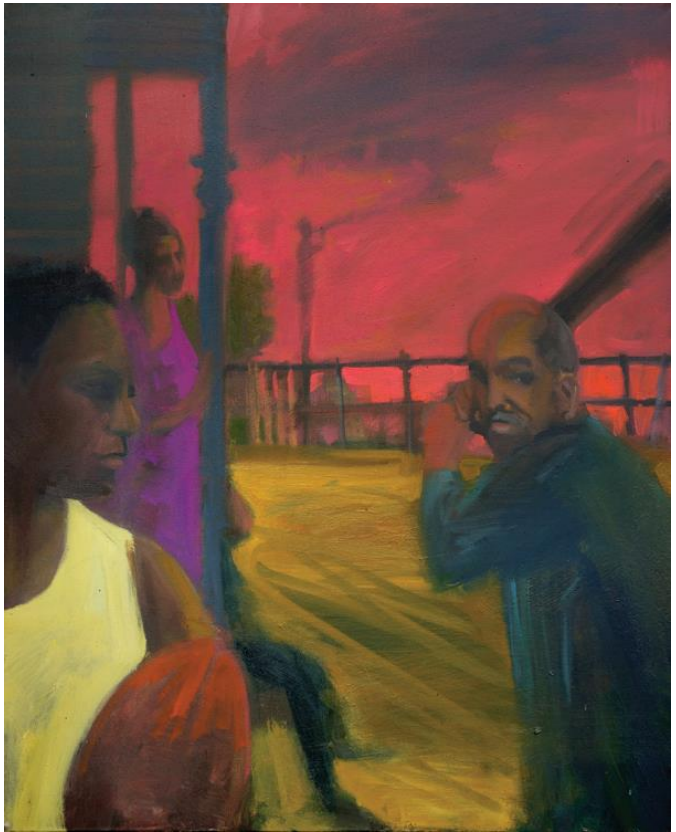




INDIANA
REPERTORY
THEATRE

August Wilson's **Fences**

March 9 – April 3, 2016
on the OneAmerica Mainstage



STUDY GUIDE

edited by Richard J Roberts & Milicent Wright
with contributions by Janet Allen, Lou Bellamy
Vicki Smith, Mathew J. LeFebvre, Don Darnutzer, Brian Jerome Peterson

Indiana Repertory Theatre
140 West Washington Street • Indianapolis, Indiana 46204
Janet Allen, Executive Artistic Director Suzanne Sweeney, Managing Director

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August Wilson's *Fences*

A former Negro League baseball player, thwarted in his dreams of a Major League career, struggles to provide for his family and break free from the boundaries imposed upon him. Set in 1957, at the intersection of old prejudices and changing opportunities, *Fences* is a powerful drama filled with passionate love and thundering rage, generous laughter and searing pain. Estimated length: 2 hours, 30 minutes, including 1 intermission

Recommended for grades 9-12 due to strong language and mature themes.

Themes & Topics

Family Values and Responsibility	The Great Migration
Respect and Independence	Love and Sacrifice
Coming of Age and Inter-Generational Conflict	Death and Aging
Wisdom and Disability	Race and Barriers

Student Matinees at 10:00 A.M. on March 16, 17, 22, 23, and 30

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Synopsis

August Wilson's *Fences* begins in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, in the year 1957. It is the story of Troy Maxson, a charismatic man struggling with the racial injustices that have restricted his life and the life of his family. Troy was once a baseball player, but could not play professionally because of his color. His anger is heightened by the fact that Jackie Robinson, a player he considers to be average, broke the color barrier long after Troy was no longer eligible to play.

Troy's wife, Rose, is as accepting and calm as Troy is angry. During the course of the play, we discover that Troy is having an affair with a local woman, Alberta, and that he has made her pregnant. Rose, although she is angry and deeply hurt, still raises the child as her own when Alberta dies in childbirth.

Troy also has two sons: Lyons, the son of a previous marriage, and Cory, who is being recruited to play college football. Troy often quarrels with his sons; he resents that Lyons comes to visit only when he wants to borrow money, and he does not want Cory to waste time on school athletics only to be hurt by discrimination the way he was hurt. And although he would never admit it, Troy may be jealous of Cory's opportunity, an opportunity Troy never had.

Troy is also ridden with guilt about his brother, Gabriel, who was wounded in the war. Because of the financial compensation Gabriel's family received, Troy was able to buy his house, to have his family. Troy is haunted by the fact that, were it not for his brother's loss—a loss incurred while fighting for a nation that still gives his race few rights—Troy would not enjoy the few comforts he has.

This is a play about anger; anger against a society that allows a man to die for his country but does not allow him to play baseball. It is a play about limitations—fences—that black Americans are not allowed to cross. It is a play about family, groups of people who try to nurture each other and create an equality, if only within the confines of a fence that surrounds the yard. It is a play about escape—laughing with a friend on the porch after work, telling stories of even harder times—escape which Troy ultimately seeks in the house of another woman. But the struggle he tries to escape is always there, and the only solace is within the fence that surrounds his own house.

"That is the story of *Fences*, which we build to keep things and people out or in."

—Lloyd Richards, *original director of the play*

"When the sins of our fathers visit us, we do not have to play host. We can banish them with forgiveness as God, in his Largeness and Laws."

—August Wilson

Legacies

by Janet Allen,
Executive
Artistic Director

Producing *Fences* for a second time at the IRT provides a variety of leverage points for reflection. Our first production of the play in 1996 came at a time when playwright August Wilson's star was on the rise. He had not yet completed his monumental ten-play series documenting the African American experience in each decade of the 20th century. He was winning awards, changing perspectives, and introducing a new language and energy to the American theatre. Twenty

years later, his untimely death in 2005 at age 60, which robbed our culture of a master poet and sage, seems far too long ago. Mercifully, his plays are easily proving the test of time and becoming classics, perhaps none so thoroughly and memorably as *Fences*.

Another way in which time has surely passed in our approach to this play is in its casting. In our 1996 production, Indianapolis native and beloved actor David Alan Anderson played the older son Lyons. In our current production, David is playing Troy, father and towering center point of the play. The 1996 Troy will be remembered by many of you: he was played by John Henry Redwood, whose career at the IRT was most notable for creating the role of Alonzo Fields in our first production of *Looking over the President's Shoulder* in 2001. John Henry's



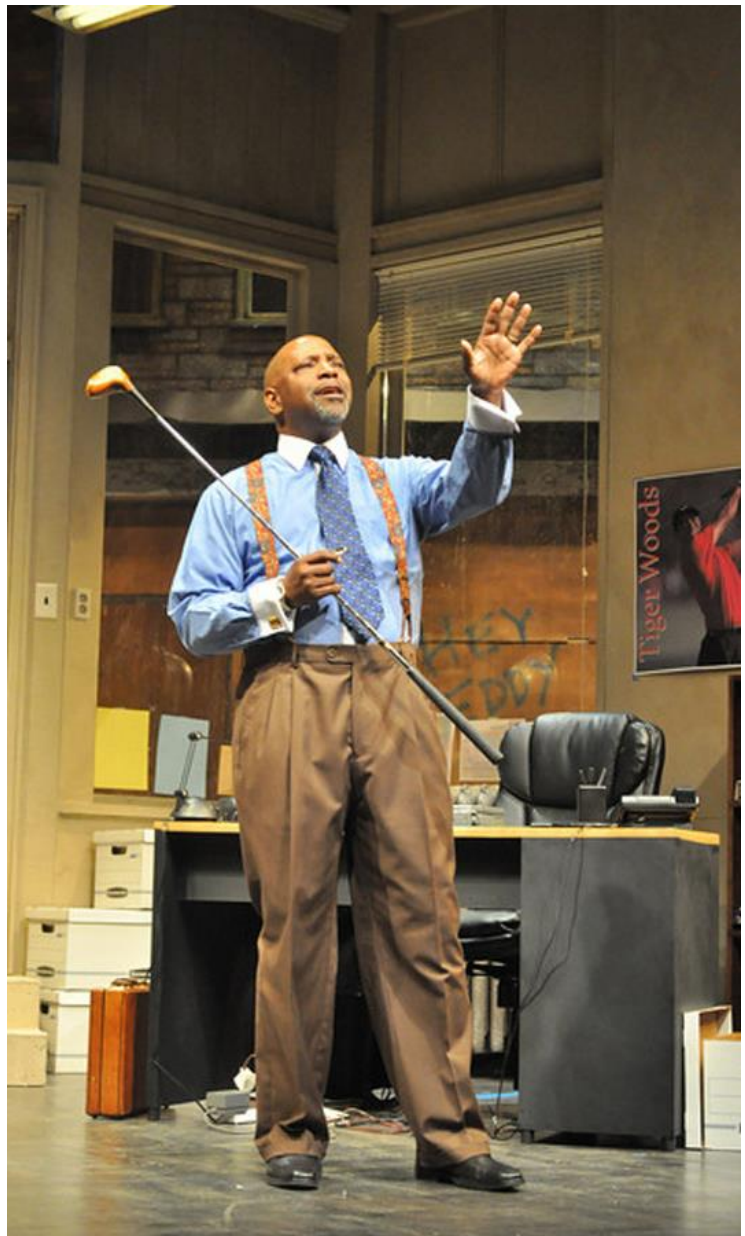
*David Alan Anderson and John Henry Redwood
in the IRT's 1996 production of Fences.*

own untimely death at age 60 stopped short an amazing career. It also left an empty hole in several productions of *Looking over the President's Shoulder* scheduled around the country—holes that David Alan Anderson filled ably, and beautifully, including the IRT's own second production of the play in 2008. There are some real legacy moments at work here.

And here's another: this production is blessed to be directed by Lou Bellamy, whose own relationship with August Wilson, his entire oeuvre, and with David Alan Anderson for that matter, gives us great opportunity for gratitude. As Lou details in his own program note (see *page 6*), his long relationship as an actor, director, and producer of Wilson's work makes him the leading interpreter of Wilson's plays and characters. He literally knows these plays inside out, having worked on them now for more than 35 years. Lou's legacy with *Fences*, and all of Wilson's work, means that he brings with him a wealth of deep and nuanced understanding and tremendous love for these characters and this story.

This production is the product of that deep understanding, and to the loyalty of actors and designers to Lou's vision. The majority of the actors in this production and the entire design team created a production of *Fences* at the Denver Center Theatre Company in 2014. That production was so lauded that several of us decided it needed another life: so this current production is being shared by Arizona Theatre Company, Indiana Repertory Theatre, and Milwaukee Repertory Theatre, and therefore seen by audiences across the country. My thanks to Lou for his early support of August Wilson, for his ability to inspire intense loyalty and fierce performances from artists, and for entrepreneurial skills that allow us to hold this play in our hands and share it with thousands of people, many of whom may be experiencing this masterpiece for the first time. May its legacy live on.

*David Alan Anderson
in the IRT's 2012 production of
August Wilson's Radio Golf.*



Mr. Wilson and Me

by Lou Bellamy, director

My relationship with the Wilson oeuvre is largely due to my friendship with the playwright as well as my role as founding artistic director of Penumbra Theatre Company in Saint Paul, Minnesota. As artistic director, I produced Mr. Wilson's first professional production—*Black Bart and the Sacred Hills* in 1982. Penumbra Theatre continues to hold the record for having produced more of his work than any theatre in the world. Mr. Wilson was a member of Penumbra Theatre Company and wrote *Malcolm X*, a one-man show, expressly for me to perform. I've had the honor of bringing several of his characters to life on the stage, including Troy Maxson, Wilson's flawed hero in *Fences*.

My professional aesthetic, my relationship with and interpretation of history, and the manner in which I present African American comportment and culture on stage is shaped by his work. I find the spaces Wilson has engineered in this work capable of being filled by authentic African American cultural rhythms and nuance. Yet, *Fences* remains perhaps August Wilson's most accessible play. Maybe it's the structure, which weaves Wilson's tale around a single, Lear-like figure who has at once engendered deep understanding, revulsion, and identification from audiences all over the world.

The ensemble you will meet in this production (which includes IRT stalwart David Alan Anderson) is easily the strongest I've had the pleasure of leading. The quality and attention to detail of the designers is, in my estimation, without equal. Please enjoy the fruits of our labor, and experience the "thunder" that is *Fences*.



*David Alan Anderson
and Kim Staunton
in Fences, 2016.*

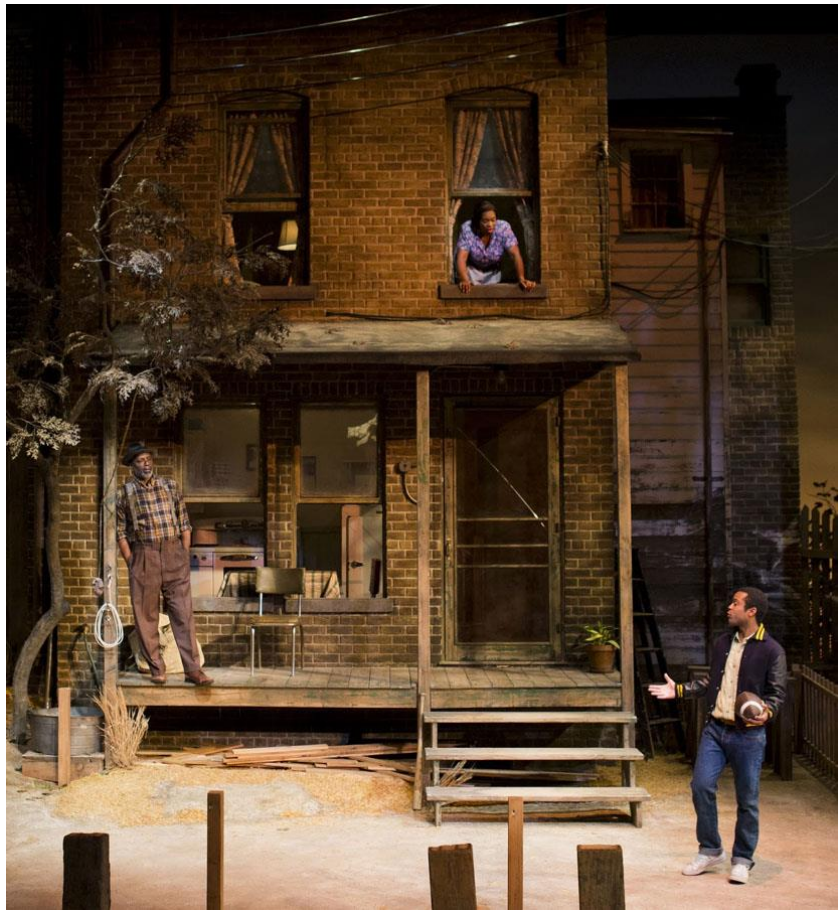
"It's August's language—the rhythm of hurt, the rhythm of pain, the rhythm of ecstasy, the rhythm of family—which sets him apart and is why we call him the heavyweight champion."

—Lou Bellamy, Director

From the Playwright

by August Wilson

Near the turn of the century, the destitute of Europe sprang on the city with tenacious claws and an honest and solid dream. The city devoured them. They swelled its belly until it burst into a thousand furnaces and sewing machines, a thousand butcher shops and baker's ovens, a thousand churches and hospitals and funeral parlors and money lenders. The city grew. It nourished itself and offered each man a partnership limited only by his talent, his guile, and his willingness and capacity for hard work. For the immigrants of Europe, a dream dared and won true.



David Alan Anderson, Kim Staunton, and Edgar Sanchez in Fences, 2016.

The descendants of African slaves were offered no such welcome or participation. They came from places called the Carolinas and the Virginias, Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi, and Tennessee. They came strong, eager, searching. The city rejected them and they fled, settled along the riverbanks and under bridges in shallow, ramshackle houses made of sticks and tarpaper. They collected rags and wood. They sold the use of their muscles and their bodies. They cleaned houses and washed clothes, they shined shoes, and in quiet desperation and vengeful pride, they stole, and lived in pursuit of their own dream: that they could breathe free, finally, and stand to meet life with the force and dignity and whatever eloquence the heart could call upon.

By 1957, the hard-won victories of the European immigrants had solidified the industrial might of America. War had been confronted and won with new energies that used loyalty and patriotism as its fuel. Life was rich, full, and flourishing. The Milwaukee Braves won the World Series, and the hot winds of change that would make the sixties a turbulent, racing, dangerous, and provocative decade had not yet begun to blow full.

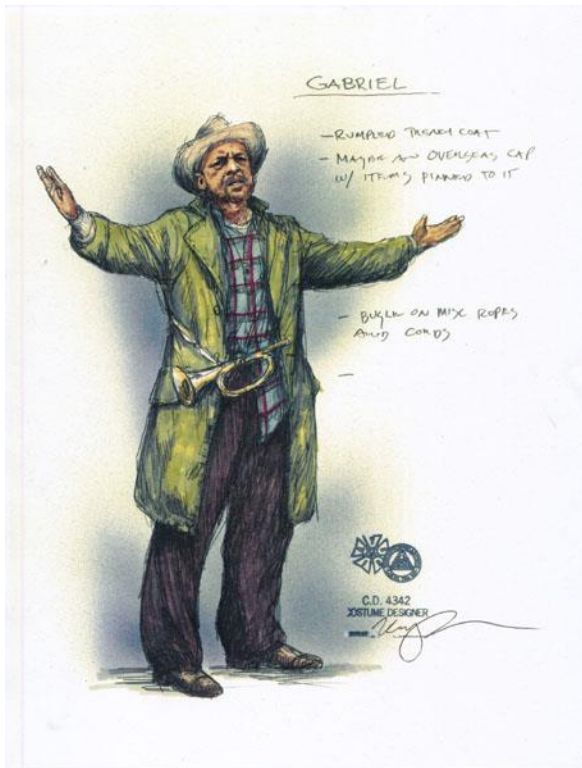
Returning to the Hill District

Vicki Smith Scenic Designer

Fences takes place in the Hill District of Pittsburgh, where August Wilson grew up. There is a wonderful photographer named Charles “Teenie” Harris who documented that neighborhood extensively from the 1930s to the 1960s, so there is a wealth of period source material to look at. The neighborhood is mostly brick row houses, two stories, tall and narrow, with streets made of pavers, and small yards of hard-packed dirt with little vegetation. The houses were mostly built in the mid-to-late 19th century and, in Harris’s photographs from the 1950s, they show their age. Troy Maxson’s house is on an alley, narrower than a street. I wanted his house to be architecturally correct for Pittsburgh, but I particularly wanted to close it in with surrounding buildings, leaving only a narrow slot of sky visible: Troy is a man who doesn’t have a lot of room to move in his life.

Scenic drawing by designer Vicki Smith.





Mathew J. LeFebvre Costume Designer

There's a level of authenticity that was essential to the design. We drew great inspiration from the photographs of Charles "Teenie" Harris, who took photos of daily life in the Hill District of Pittsburgh. These photos are rich with vital information regarding character, attitudes, texture, and living conditions specific to the area and the period where the play is set. I tried to use as much vintage clothing as possible, again striving for authenticity; although it's possible to recreate clothing for different periods, it's hard to beat the real thing. Many of the fabrics used in the 1950s are much different than what we can find today, not just color and pattern, but also weight and drape. You'll see a combination of vintage and reproduction clothing; this mixture was especially important with Rose. In order to show her trajectory through use of color, we couldn't rely solely on existing garments; but we were fortunate to find reproduction fabrics which really had the right feel for this production.

Renderings for Gabriel and Rose and by costume designer Mathew J. LeFebvre.

Don Darnutzer Lighting Designer

The job as the lighting designer is to support the vision of the director and to compliment the designs created by the scenic, costume, and sound designers. My design for *Fences* is a realistic treatment of time of day, the passage of time, and season. The lighting follows the emotional arc of the play by my use of color, intensity, and direction of the lighting. The play takes place in the Hill District of Pittsburgh in 1957. One of my design elements for this play is the quality of light as it filters through the polluted skies caused by the many steel mills in Pittsburgh at that time. I hope to recreate the subdued and hazy color in the skies which is created by the scattering of light off particulates and pollution.



August Wilson, Playwright

August Wilson was born Frederick August Kittel in 1945 in the Hill District of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, which would later be the setting for most of his plays. His father was a white German immigrant; his mother was black. Wilson later stated that the “nurturing, the learning” of his life were “all black ideas about the world that I learned from my mother. My mother’s a very strong woman. My female characters come in large part from my mother.”

In the late 1950s, August’s family moved to Hazelwood, a predominantly white suburb of Pittsburgh. Wilson attended

Gladstone High School until 1961, when he dropped out at age fifteen. Unlike many dropouts, Wilson did not leave school because he couldn’t read. “I was bored,” he later said. “I was confused, I was disappointed in myself, and I didn’t do any work until my history teacher assigned us to write a paper on a historical personage.” Wilson chose Napoleon because he had always been fascinated with the “self-made emperor.” It was a twenty-page paper, and Wilson’s sister typed it up on a rented typewriter.

Since Wilson had previously done no work in class, his instructor found it hard to believe that it was his own work. He wrote both an A+ and then an F on the paper. If Wilson couldn’t prove that the paper was his own, he would receive the failing grade. “Unless you call everybody in here and have all the people prove they wrote them, even the ones that went and copied out of the encyclopedia word for word, I don’t feel I should have to prove anything,” replied Wilson. He took the failing grade, tore up the paper, threw it in his teacher’s wastebasket, and walked out of school.

“The next morning, I got up and played basketball right underneath the principal’s window. As I look back on it, I see I wanted him to come and say, ‘Why aren’t you in school?’ so I could tell



someone. And he never came out.” Rather than tell his mother he had dropped out, Wilson spent every school day at the public library, reading some 300 books over the next four years. His reading eventually led him to pursue a career as a writer.

Wilson spent years “hanging out on street corners, following old men around, working odd jobs.” Then he discovered a place called Pat’s Cigar Store in Pittsburgh. “It was the same place that Claude McKay mentioned in his book *Home to Harlem*. When I found out about that, I said, ‘This is part of history,’ and I ran down there to where all the old men in the community would congregate.”

Wilson channeled his early literary efforts into poetry, saving his nickels for a \$20 used typewriter when he was 19. Around that same time, he bought a recording of blues singer Bessie Smith, and hearing this music for the first time changed his life. Later he wrote that hearing Smith’s voice led to an “awakening.” He began to see himself as a messenger, a link in the chain of African American culture, and he assumed the responsibility of passing stories and ideas from the past to the future. The idea of the blues as a vessel for the African American experience is one that appears frequently in Wilson’s work, along with a given character searching for his song—his own personal legacy and his path in life.

In 1968, Wilson co-founded Pittsburgh’s Black Horizon Theatre Company. He began writing one-act plays during the height of the Black Power Movement as a way “to politicize the community and raise consciousness.” He always maintained that the “one thing that has best served me as a playwright is my background in poetry.” His move to Minnesota in the early 1970s served as a catalyst, permitting both the colloquial voices of his youth and his burgeoning skills as a dramatist to flourish at a remove from their geographical source.

(opposite)
August Wilson
in the Hill District.



(right)
Portrait by James Gayles.

Wilson did not think of himself as a playwright, however, until he received his first writing grant in the late 1970s. “I walked in,” he remembered of his first encounter at the Playwright’s Center, “and there were sixteen playwrights. It was the first time I had dinner with other playwrights. It was the first time I began to think of myself as one.”

It was this grant that allowed Wilson to rework a one-act about a blues recording session into what became the full-length *Ma Rainey’s Black Bottom*. The play caught the attention of Lloyd Richards, artistic director of the Eugene O’Neill Theatre Center and dean of the Yale School of Drama. Richards directed *Ma Rainey* and many of Wilson’s subsequent dramas. When *Ma Rainey* ran on Broadway for ten months in 1984, it was the first profitable Broadway play by a black writer since Lorraine Hansberry’s *A Raisin in the Sun* in 1959. Wilson’s successful career opened doors for many other talented writers.

Around this time, Wilson conceived of a truly grand-scale project: He would write ten plays, one for each decade of the twentieth century, each focusing on a particular issue that challenged the African American community at that time. Over the next 20 years, Wilson faced this challenge at the stand-up desk in his basement, where he wrote and rewrote each play in longhand on legal pads. Along the way he won two Pulitzer Prizes, for *Fences* and *The Piano Lesson*. Wilson finished his cycle with two plays focused on the beginning of the century—*Gem of the Ocean*—and the end of the century—*Radio Golf*.

Wilson died of liver cancer in 2005. Two weeks after his death, Broadway’s Virginia Theatre in New York City was renamed the August Wilson Theatre, becoming the first Broadway theatre to be named for an African American. Today August Wilson is considered not only one of the greatest African American playwrights, but also one of the greatest American playwrights of our time.



August Wilson's Twentieth Century

set in 1904 • *Gem of the Ocean* (premiered 2003—produced by the IRT in 2007)

A haunting play that conjures tales of slave ships and the black man's world after slavery.

1911 • *Joe Turner's Come and Gone* (1986)

The children of slavery grapple with a world that won't let them forget the past.

1927 • *Ma Rainey's Black Bottom* (1984)

A volatile trumpet player rebels against racism in a Chicago recording studio.

1936 • *The Piano Lesson* (1987—produced by the IRT in 2008)

A brother and sister battle over a family heirloom, a link to their past. Pulitzer Prize winner.

1948 • *Seven Guitars* (1995)

The final days of a Pittsburgh blues guitarist, as remembered by his circle of friends.

1957 • *Fences* (1985)

(produced by the IRT in 1996 & 2016)

A father-son drama of dreams denied.

Pulitzer Prize & Tony Award winner.

1968 • *Two Trains Running* (1990)

The displaced and the dreamers congregate in a dilapidated restaurant scheduled for demolition.

1977 • *Jitney* (1979, 1996)

(produced by the IRT in 2004)

The owner of a jitney cab company squares off against his son, newly released from prison.

1985 • *King Hedley II* (1999)

An ex-con attempts to get his life back on track despite the despair that surrounds him.

1997 • *Radio Golf* (2005)

(produced by the IRT in 2012)

A successful middle-class entrepreneur tries to reconcile the present with the past.

Photograph by Charles "Teenie" Harris.



The Hill District

The Hill District, where August Wilson was born and where most of his plays, including *Fences*, are set, is a sprawling 650 acres that looks across Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. It was the first district in the city to develop outside the walls of the original Fort Pitt. Originally farmland owned by William Penn's grandson, the area became the first planned residential neighborhood in Pittsburgh in 1840, attracting wealthy professionals. In the 1870s, African Americans and



© Charlie Teenie Harris



SHURPY

European immigrants began to settle in the Hill District, attracted by job opportunities in the steel industry. By the 1930s, the residents of the Hill District were mostly African American, Jewish, and Italian American. From the 1930s to the 1950s, the Hill District was one of the most energetic and powerful African American neighborhoods in the nation, flourishing as a center for business, art, and music, overflowing with clubs, businesses, and churches, and bustling with crowds both day and night. At the same time, the district's infrastructure was crumbling. In the 1950s and 1960s, homes were razed but not replaced. More recent housing, retail, and restoration developments bring hope to this historic area, but today the Hill District still struggles.

Photographs by Charles "Teenie" Harris.

America in 1957

August Wilson's *Fences* is set in the Pittsburgh Hill District of 1957, an important year in African American history that foreshadowed and gave momentum to the burgeoning Civil Rights Movement that would rise to greater prominence in the 1960s. Also important to the social fabric of 1950s America was a strong undercurrent of anti-Communism and conservatism; the words "under God" were added to the Pledge of Allegiance by the Eisenhower Administration in 1954, McCarthyism was fresh in the national memory, the Cold War was firmly established following World War II, and church attendance increased throughout the decade.



Protesting school integration in Little Rock.

The year 1957 saw the delivery of Martin Luther King Jr.'s "Give Us the Ballot" speech, which asked the U.S. Congress to ensure the voting rights of African Americans. Previously known primarily for his involvement in the Montgomery bus boycott of 1955, King's influence rose further as the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1957—the first bill of its kind since 1875—guaranteed all African Americans voting rights, which previously had been limited to approximately 20%.

Also in 1957, nine African American students demanded desegregation by enrolling at Little Rock's Central High School, as ordered three years earlier by the outcome of *Brown v. Board of Education*. That Supreme Court decision had overturned the "separate but equal" doctrine that still permeated much of the American South as a major ideological component of Jim Crow laws. While a mob of more than 1,000 white protestors protested integration in Little Rock, African American major league baseball player Hank Aaron hit a home run to secure the Milwaukee Braves a trip to the World Series.

Thus it is a significant historical moment into which Wilson weaves the story of Troy Maxson and his family in *Fences*. Wilson believed, however, as a writer and chronicler of the African American experience, that it was not the events of history that needed to be examined, but rather how the culture reacts to events as they unfold. To encompass the complexity and the impact of a specific moment in time, Wilson used the blues of the 1950s as a powerful source of inspiration: "I see blues as the cultural response of black America to the world that they found themselves in, and contained within the blues are the ideas and attitudes of the culture."

—article courtesy of Arizona Theatre Company

Negro League Baseball

“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.”

—Bono to Troy in *Fences*

Josh Gibson scores a run in the 1944 Negro League East-West All-Star Game.



The Negro leagues were a group of professional baseball leagues comprised of predominantly black teams, created in response to a “gentlemen’s agreement” from 1884 which barred African Americans from competing in America’s major and minor baseball leagues. In 1920, Rube Foster, star pitcher, manager, and owner of the Chicago American Giants, organized eight leading black teams from the Midwest into the Negro National League, the first commercially successful all-black baseball league in the United States. Over the next four decades, numerous other segregated major leagues would be formed with varying degrees of success, including a second Negro National League, the Eastern Colored League, and the Negro American League.

The onset of the Great Depression and an absence of sustained leadership threatened the sustainability of Negro League baseball, which was largely revived through the early 1930s in Pittsburgh, the only city in the country that was home to two black professional teams. Gambler and racketeer Gus Greenlee, owner of the Pittsburgh Crawfords, financed and assembled a team of amateurs from the Pittsburgh Hill District that grew to one of the strongest lineups in baseball history—including the legendary Satchel Paige and Josh Gibson—winning the Negro League Championship in 1935. Pittsburgh’s Homestead Grays also dominated the Eastern baseball scene, led by future Hall of Famers “Cool” Pap Bell, Judy Johnson, Buck Leonard, “Smokey” Joe Williams, Josh Gibson (before he joined the Crawfords), and Cuban great Martin Dihigo. Black American baseball reached its zenith of popularity during World War II, when the military-industrial complex and the wartime economy boosted employment and enhanced the disposable income of millions of black American fans, who filled Negro League venues across the country.

Black baseball teams maintained a high level of professional skill and grew to become major components of economic development in many black communities. Negro League teams also

developed large and dedicated fan followings, becoming the largest black businesses in the United States before racial integration. They trained such future Major League players as Willie Mays, Jackie Robinson, and Hank Aaron. While the top levels of black baseball demonstrated organized league structures, many teams played in loosely organized circuits or as independent teams, often complicated by ongoing segregationist practices in the lodging and food industries. The Kansas City Monarchs even resorted to camping out with tents, cots, and cooking gear in order to more comfortably sustain themselves on the road.

In 1945, club president and general manager Branch Rickey of Major League Baseball's Brooklyn Dodgers made history when he recruited Jackie Robinson from the Negro League's Kansas City Monarchs. An iconic moment in the American Civil Rights Movement and baseball history, the breaking of the color barrier in Major League Baseball invited the recruitment of the best black players to the Major and the minor leagues; loyal fans followed their favorite players, leading to the ultimate demise of the Negro leagues by the early 1960s.

—article courtesy of Arizona Theatre Company

The Indianapolis Clowns

The Indianapolis Clowns were a professional baseball team in the Negro American League. They began play in the 1930s as the independent Ethiopian Clowns, joined the Negro American League as the Cincinnati Clowns and relocated to Indianapolis in 1946. Hank Aaron was a Clown for a short period, and the Clowns were also the first professional baseball team to hire a female player. The team won the league championship in 1950. While still fielding a legitimate team, the Clowns also toured with several members known for comic acts—sort of a baseball version of the Harlem Globetrotters. As the Negro Leagues declined in the late 1940s after the integration of Major League Baseball, the Clowns continued operations on barnstorming tours into the 1960s. By 1966 the Indianapolis Clowns were the last Negro

league team still playing. The Clowns continued to play exhibition games into the 1980s, but as a humorous sideshow rather than a competitive sport, finally disbanded in 1989.

Baseball card for "Goose" Tatum of the Indianapolis Clowns.



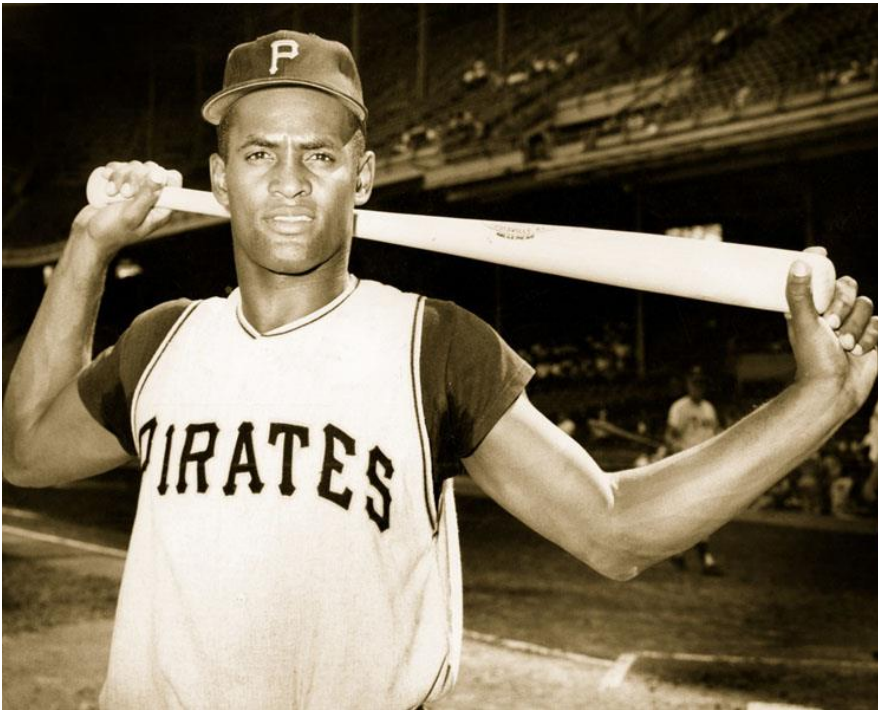
Baseball Players

A number of historic baseball players are mentioned in Fences.

Hank Aaron (*right*): Major League Baseball (MLB) right fielder who played from 1954 to 1976—21 seasons for the Milwaukee/Atlanta Braves and two seasons for the Milwaukee Brewers. He held the MLB record for career home runs for 33 years, still holds several MLB offensive records, and is one of only two players to hit 30 or more home runs in a season at least 15 times.



Lew Burdette: American MLB starting pitcher who played primarily for the Boston/Milwaukee Braves. He led Milwaukee to its only title in the 1957 World Series, where he was named Most Valuable Player.



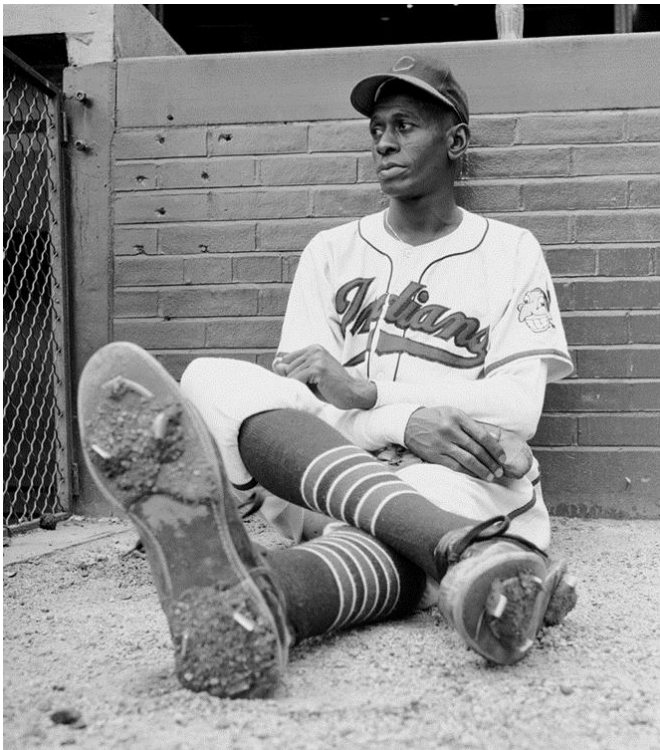
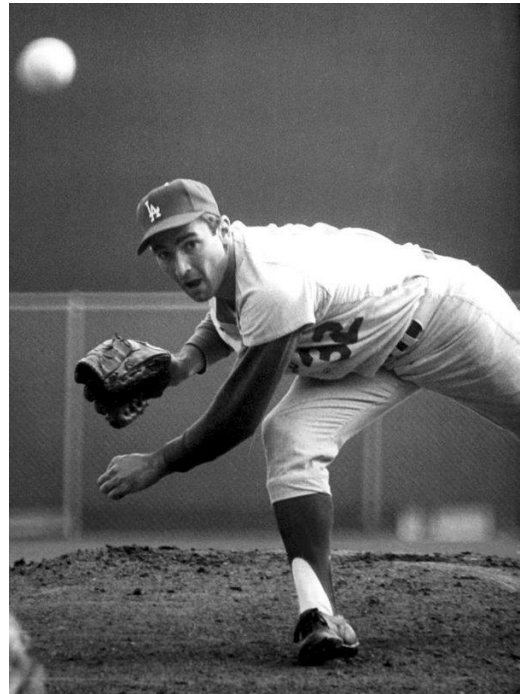
Roberto Clemente (*left*): A Puerto Rican who played 18 seasons for the Pittsburgh Pirates. He became the first Latin American and Caribbean player to be inducted into the National Baseball Hall of Fame in 1973.

Wes Covington: A Major League Baseball left-fielder who played for six teams, including the Los Angeles Dodgers, throughout his ten-year career.

Josh Gibson: an American Negro league baseball player from 1930 to 1946. Though he never played in the Major Leagues, he was the second Negro League player to be inducted into the National Baseball Hall of Fame. Known as the “black Babe Ruth,” he remains among the greatest power hitters and catchers ever. He was a two-time Negro World Series champion and 12-time All-Star.

Sandy Koufax (*right*): MLB player from 1955 to 1966, playing for the Brooklyn and Los Angeles Dodgers. He was the first three-time winner of the Cy Young Award for the best MLB pitcher. He won four World Series, an MVP award, and was a seven-time All-Star. Arthritis in his elbow ended his career when he was only 30. At age 36, he became the youngest player to be inducted into the Baseball Hall of Fame.

Satchel Paige (*below*): While his outstanding control as a pitcher first got him noticed, it was his infectious, cocky, enthusiastic personality and his love for the game that made him a star. In 1948 he became the first player who had pitched in the Negro Leagues to pitch in the MLB World Series.



Jackie Robinson: The first African American to play in the major leagues in the modern era when the Brooklyn Dodgers started him in 1947.

Babe Ruth: Nicknamed "The Great Bambino," he played the majority of his career (1914-1935) with the Boston Red Sox and New York Yankees. Originally a very successful pitcher, he transitioned to become an outfielder. He is widely believed to be the greatest baseball player of all time, setting numerous major league records, some of which still stand today. A popular public figure, he won seven World Series, an MVP, and was a two-time All-Star. He was one of the first five inductees into the National Baseball Hall of Fame in 1936.

George Selkirk: a Canadian baseball player from 1934 to 1942. He won five World Series and was selected to two All-Star teams. Nicknamed "Twinkletoes" because of his distinctive running style, he's widely thought to be one of the greatest Canadian baseball players ever.

Warren Spahn: Left-handed pitcher in the Baseball Hall of Fame who began his 21-year career with the Boston Braves and ended it with the San Francisco Giants.

Interactive Civil Rights Timeline

When we hear the term Civil Rights, many of us often think exclusively of African Americans. But Civil Rights is a broad term that covers people of all races, genders, and sexualities.

1863 Emancipation Proclamation issued by President Abraham Lincoln

http://www.archives.gov/exhibits/featured_documents/emancipation_proclamation/

1865 13th Amendment ratified—slavery abolished

<http://www.loc.gov/rr/program/bib/ourdocs/13thamendment.html>

1865 Reconstruction begins (through 1877)

<http://www.digitalhistory.uh.edu/exhibits/reconstruction/timeline.html>

<http://www.shmoop.com/reconstruction/timeline.html>

1868 14th Amendment ratified—equal protection under the law

<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/215201/Fourteenth-Amendment>

1875 Civil Rights Act of 1875 (ruled unconstitutional in 1883)

<http://history.house.gov/HistoricalHighlight/Detail/35889>

<http://docsouth.unc.edu/church/turnerbd/summary.html>

1876 First Jim Crow laws

<http://www.loc.gov/teachers/classroommaterials/primarysourcesets/civil-rights/>

1888 First Black-owned banks

<http://www.blackpast.org/aah/true-reformers-bank-1888-1910>

<https://www.fedpartnership.gov/minority-banking-timeline/capital-savings-bank>

https://www.richmondfed.org/~media/richmondfedorg/publications/research/region_focus/2007/Spring/pdf/economic_history.pdf

1896 Plessey v. Ferguson—separate but equal ruled constitutional

<http://www.ourdocuments.gov/doc.php?flash=true&doc=52>

http://www.law.cornell.edu/supct/html/historics/USSC_CR_0163_0537_ZS.html

1870 15th Amendment ratified—right to vote

<http://www.crf-usa.org/black-history-month/african-americans-and-the-15th-amendment>

<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/americanexperience/features/general-article/grant-fifteenth/>

1909 NAACP founded

<http://www.naacp.org/pages/naacp-history>

1916 The Great Migration

<http://www.history.com/topics/black-history/great-migration>

<http://www.inmotionaame.org/print.cfm;jsessionid=f8302664861457417887695?migration=8&bhcp=1>

<http://www.blackpast.org/aah/great-migration-1915-1960>

1936 Blues legend Robert Johnson makes his first recording

<http://www.history.com/this-day-in-history/blues-legend-robert-johnson-makes-first-ever-recording>

<http://www.biography.com/people/robert-johnson-9356324>

<http://blues.about.com/od/earlybluesessentials/a/10earlybluesart.htm>

http://www.thebluestrail.com/artists/mus_jal.htm

1936 Jesse Owens wins at Berlin Olympics

<http://www.jesseowens.com/about/>

1939 Marian Anderson sings at Lincoln Memorial

<http://www.history.com/this-day-in-history/marian-anderson-sings-at-lincoln-memorial>

<http://www.npr.org/2014/04/09/298760473/denied-a-stage-she-sang-for-a-nation>

1946 The integration of the NFL

<http://newsroom.ucla.edu/stories/forgotten-story-of-four-who-broke-color-barrier-in-pro-football-to-screen-at-royce>

<http://www.sikids.com/si-kids/2016/01/12/forgotten-four-who-integrated-nfl>

<http://nflfootballjournal.blogspot.com/2016/02/four-men-who-broke-nfl-color-barrior.html>

1947 Jackie Robinson breaks the color line in Major League Baseball

<http://www.history.com/this-day-in-history/jackie-robinson-breaks-major-league-color-barrier>

1948 President Harry Truman desegregates the armed forces

<http://www.trumanlibrary.org/anniversaries/desegblurb.htm>

<http://afroamhistory.about.com/od/civilrightsstruggle1/a/order9981.htm>

1954 Brown v. Board of Education—separate but equal ruled unconstitutional

<http://www.uscourts.gov/educational-resources/get-involved/federal-court-activities/brown-board-education-re-enactment/history.aspx>

<http://www.naacpldf.org/case/brown-v-board-education>

http://www.law.cornell.edu/supct/html/historics/USSC_CR_0347_0483_ZO.html

1955 Montgomery, Alabama begins year-long bus boycott

<http://www.montgomeryboycott.com/>

- 1955 A. Phillip Randolph, father of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, became a vice-president of the AFL-CIO's Executive Council**
<http://apri.org/387-3/>
<http://www.aphiliprandolphmuseum.com/>
<http://www.aflcio.org/About/Our-History/Key-People-in-Labor-History/Asa-Philip-Randolph-1889-1979>
<http://www.encyclopedia.chicagohistory.org/pages/174.html>
- 1955 Death of Emmett Till**
<http://www.biography.com/people/emmett-till-507515>
<http://time.com/4008545/emmett-till-history/>
- 1957 Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) founded; Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. elected president**
<http://sclcnational.org/our-history/>
- 1957 Civil Rights Act of 1957**
http://www.eisenhower.archives.gov/research/online_documents/civil_rights_act.html
- 1957 Nine Black students integrate Central High School in Little Rock, Arkansas**
<http://life.time.com/history/little-rock-nine-1957-photos/#1>
<http://littlerock9.com/History.aspx>
- 1960 Lunch counter sit-ins in Greensboro, Nashville, and elsewhere**
<http://americanhistory.si.edu/brown/history/6-legacy/freedom-struggle-2.html>
- 1963 Medgar Evers killed on his front porch**
http://www.evertribute.org/house_tour.php
- 1963 March on Washington—Dr. King's famous "I Have A Dream" speech**
<http://www.archives.gov/press/exhibits/dream-speech.pdf>
- 1964 Civil Rights Act of 1964**
<http://www.archives.gov/education/lessons/civil-rights-act/>
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q11kvbJy0cs>
- 1964 Affirmative Action**
<http://www.u-s-history.com/pages/h1970.html>
- 1965 Voting Rights Act is signed by President Lyndon B. Johnson**
http://www.core-online.org/History/voting_rights.htm

1968 Dr. King's speech, "I Have Been to the Mountaintop"

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IDl84vusXos>

<http://abcnews.go.com/Politics/martin-luther-kings-final-speech-ive-mountaintop-full/story?id=18872817>

1968 Memphis Sanitation Workers' Strike

<http://www.afscme.org/union/history/mlk/1968-afscme-memphis-sanitation-workers-strike-chronology>

<http://www.theatlantic.com/entertainment/archive/2011/02/all-labor-has-dignity-martin-luther-king-jrs-fight-for-economic-justice/71423/>

1968 Martin Luther King Jr. assassinated

<http://history1900s.about.com/cs/martinlutherking/a/mlkassass.htm>

http://mlkkpp01.stanford.edu/index.php/encyclopedia/encyclopedia/enc_kings_assassination_4_april_1968

1968 Shirley Chisholm is the first African-American woman elected to Congress.

<http://history.house.gov/HistoricalHighlight/Detail/37113?ret=True>

<http://atyourlibrary.org/culture/shirley-chisholm-her-historic-run-congress-and-president-influenced-generations>

The Civil Rights movement beyond the 60s

<http://abhmuseum.org/2012/06/turning-the-tables-on-civil-rights-the-1970s-and-1980s/>

http://www.pbs.org/wnet/aaworld/timeline/modern_01.html

Black Women in the Civil Rights Movement: 1960-1970

http://cds.library.brown.edu/projects/FreedomNow/tiffany_joseph_thesis.html

Gay Rights Movement

<http://time.com/184/gay-rights-timeline/>

Latino Civil Rights Movement

<http://www.tolerance.org/latino-civil-rights-timeline>

The Women's Rights Movement 60s and 70s

<https://tavaana.org/en/content/1960s-70s-american-feminist-movement-breaking-down-barriers-women>

Controversial Words

Since humans learned to speak, various words have been considered inappropriate in certain contexts. Ancient Roman documents discuss offensive language. In Ancient Egypt, legal documents were sealed with an obscene hieroglyph—a reminder that “to swear an oath” could mean either “to affirm a truth” or “to use profane language.” Shakespeare’s plays are considered the finest literature of the English language; perhaps their mixture of exquisite poetry and bawdy language—the sacred and the profane—is part of their eternal appeal.

It is interesting to note how language changes over time. With the rise of mass media in the twentieth century, rules and regulations were established to determine what words were inappropriate for use in radio, movies, and television. Over time, these rules have evolved in response to societal change, and sometimes such regulations can be confusing. On some television channels certain words are consistently bleeped or dubbed during one part of the day, yet acceptable at other times; on other channels, such words might always—or never—be acceptable. Over the last 50 years or so, language once considered obscene has become much more widespread and accepted. Other words, once commonplace, have been banished because they now are considered to be “politically incorrect.”

How are we, as a society or as individuals, to determine what language is appropriate in different situations? Drama, by definition, shows people in intense situations; and playwrights, in their attempt to show the truth of how people speak under such conditions, may use extreme language. Some audience members may find this language offensive, and prefer that such words not be used. Other audience members may be offended at the idea that freedom of expression might be curtailed. As language evolves, so, too, do our perceptions of language.

The “N” Word

The word *nigger* is spoken by the characters in *Fences*. This usage reflects an accurate representation of the play’s setting in America during the 1950s.

The word *nigger* was not originally used for verbal assault. It first appears in historical documents in 1587 as *negar*, an alternate spelling of *Negro*. *Nigger* was a common word in both England and America by the seventeenth century; it was considered nothing more than an alternate pronunciation of *Negro*. By 1825, however, both abolitionists and Blacks found the word offensive and began to object to its use.

Often when a word is employed as a slur against a certain group, members of the group will use that word among themselves to rob it of its negative power. Today, the word *nigger* is still controversial. While it may be heard frequently in rap songs and in conversation among younger African Americans, many older African Americans are deeply offended by it. Even within generations, not everyone agrees whether the word should be used within the African American community. Society at large, however, has condemned the word as a racial slur; its use by other races against black people demonstrates an ignorance and hatred that should not be imitated.

Pre-Show Activities

In preparing to talk about the use of **controversial language** in the play, have the students look into linguistics and etymology. Here are two sites of interest:

<http://www.linguisticsociety.org/resource/studying-linguistics>

<http://grammar.about.com/od/words/a/Etymologywords.htm>

An additional helpful resource is *The Cambridge Encyclopedia of The English Language* by David Crystal.

Assign your students some vocabulary words to research—perhaps words from the play, or words from your other teaching units—and then report their findings to the class. This is a good bridge to use in letting students know that all language is teachable. All words have roots and history to be explored. From what is the word derived? When was it first used? What is its social background? Discuss the purpose of language.

Why are certain words categorized as profane, vulgar, or taboo? What does the use of this language say about the person using it? How does society view and/or judge people who use (or object to) these words? Are there situations where profanity is inappropriate? Why? How and why have society's views of this type of language changed in the last 20 years?

Ask the students to note in the play when taboo words are used. What effect do they believe the playwright is seeking with such language? Is she successful? In what ways would the play be different if the playwright had chosen other language? What does such language reveal about the emotions, background, and point of view of the characters? What affect, if any, did the swearing have on the mood and point of view of the audience?

Perhaps you as a teacher will want to offer your students a summary of this topic that might include your observations of taboo language in literature and other media formats (past, present, and future), the rules of conduct of your school, and/or your personal views about swearing.

Blues music has a rich history that has deeply influenced rock and roll, jazz, pop, and R & B. Research the work of the musicologists Alan and John Lomax. Listen to some of the early recordings they collected and discuss what you hear that could have impacted some of the songs you enjoy today.

Discussion Questions

Compare treatment of African Americans in society today versus the 1950s. What things have changed? What things still need to be changed?

Do you think Troy is wrong to keep Cory from playing football? Why or why not? In what different ways might this decision affect Cory's later life?

Why do you think Troy resents loaning Lyons money? Have you ever lent someone something even though you didn't want to? Why did you lend it?

Why does Troy think Rose wants him to build a fence around their yard? Why is the idea of a fence so important in this play?

Whose outlook on life do you most admire in the play?

Fences starts in the year 1957. The last scene of the play takes place in 1965. What changes have taken place in those eight years, both for the characters and the nation?

Why do you think Troy discourages Cory from playing football? Provide at least three supporting details from the play.

Looking forward beyond the end of the play: do you think Troy's children will repeat his mistakes? Why or why not?

Discuss the scene where Troy tells Rose about Alberta's pregnancy. What do Troy and Rose say about what each wants from the other? How are their desires different? How are they the same?

Why does Rose decide to raise Raynell? What dreams has Rose sacrificed for Troy?

Do you believe that Troy took advantage of Gabriel's disability? Support your opinion with details from the play.

What is the symbolism of *Fences* as the title? What does the fence in the play represent? Does it mean different things to different characters? What does it mean to you as an audience member? Are other elements of the play symbolic? What are some different ways a director could utilize these symbolic elements within the play?

What were some of the issues and themes that you saw in the play? How are the issues of race represented within *Fences* still relevant today?

Who was your favorite character in the play? What did the actor do to portray this character on stage? How was this effective or not?

What was your favorite technical element of the production? How did the scenic, costume, lighting, and sound designers portray the world of the play on stage? How was their design effective or not?

How have the events in Troy's life shaped his life's journey? How might any one change in Troy's past have led to big changes in his present circumstances?

Have the students list images they remember from the play. Discuss how these images relate to or act as themes and symbols in the play. Consider such ideas as betrayal, responsibility, the Great Migration, 40 acres and a mule, family, religion, segregation, baseball, puberty, rites of passage, prison, dreams, food, music, animals, money and investment, death and birth. How does Wilson use such literary devices as personification and metaphor?

Activities

We learn about characters from what they say, what they do, and from what other characters say about them. Working in groups, choose one of the characters from the play and do a character analysis beginning with those three points. Then expand to more biographical information about your chosen character, such as age, gender, education, passions, aspirations, likes and dislikes, hopes and dreams, work life, relationships, socioeconomic position, etc. If you were to write a sequel about your character, when would you set it? why? What would your character be doing in the 1970s? In 2001? Today?

Actors often create soundtracks for themselves of music that helps to get them into character. They might choose music that speaks to what their character believes in, themes that run through the play that affect their character, music their character might have listened to through their life, or music of the time the play is set. Choose a character in the play and create a sound track. Focus on the music and lyrics of the play's era, the 1950s and 1960s. Particularly look at blues music, which is an important element in August Wilson's work.

Do a character diagram with Troy in the center. What is each of the other characters' relationship to Troy? Structurally, how does the playwright use each character in the play? What symbolism might be found in each character's name?

Investigate the efforts being made today on behalf of disabled veterans. How have such laws changed? How have the public and individuals made an impact in this area? What can you and/or your school do for the disabled vets of Indiana?

Writing Prompts

Write a story about ordinary people facing extraordinary circumstances. This can be fictional or non-fictional. If challenged for ideas, look at newspapers or online. In what ways can you help your audience to empathize with your subject and recognize their collective role in your story?

Choose one of the characters in *Fences*. As that character, write a letter to Troy on the day of his funeral. What would your character want to say to Troy? What feelings would he or she want to express? What would your character want to say to Troy about the future? Consider all the stages of grief: denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance.

Write a review of the play. What moments made an impression on you? How do the elements of scenery, costumes, lighting, and sound work with the actors' performance of the text to tell the story? What ideas or themes did the play make you think about? How did it make you feel? To share your reviews with others, send to: education.irt@gmail.com

Resources

Books

Conversations with August Wilson, edited by Jackson R. Bryer and Mary C. Hartig

August Wilson: Completing the Twentieth-Century Cycle, edited by Alan Nadel

May all Your Fences Have Gates: Essays on the Drama of August Wilson, edited by Alan Nadel

August Wilson: A Literary Companion by Mary Ellen Snodgrass

The Past as Present in the Drama of August Wilson by Harry Justin Elam

The Ground on Which I stand (Dramatic Context) by August Wilson,

August Wilson: A Research and Production Sourcebook (Modern Dramatists Research and Production Sourcebooks) by Yvonne Shafer

The Cambridge Companion to August Wilson (Cambridge Companions to Literature) by Christopher Bigsby

Better than the Best: Black Athletes Speak, 1920-2007 (V Ethel Willis White Books) edited by John C. Walter and Malina lina

Say It Loud: An Illustrated History of the Black Athlete by Roxanne Jones and Jessie Paolucci, foreward by Tony Dungy

The Unlevel Playing Field: A Documentary History of the African American Experience in Sport (Sport and Society)

Black Firsts: 4,000 Ground-Breaking and Pioneering Historical Events by Jessie Carney Smith

Great Negroes Past and Present: Volume Two by Dr. Jawanza Kunjufu

Only the Ball Was White: A History of Legendary Players and All-Black Professional Teams by Robert Peterson

The League of Outsider Baseball: An Illustrated History of Baseball's Forgotten Heroes by Gary Cieradkowski

Shades of Glory: The Negro Leagues and the Story of African American Baseball by Lawrence D. Hogan and Jules Tygiel

Curveball: The Remarkable Story of Toni Stone , the First Woman to play Professional Baseball in the Negro League by Martha Ackermann

The John Hope Franklin Series in African American History and Culture, published by The University of North Carolina Press

Shuckin' and Jivin': Folklore from Contemporary Black Americans by Daryl Cumber Dance

Juba to Jive: A Dictionary of African American Slang edited by Clarence Major

The Devil's Music: A History of the Blues by Giles Oakley

Nothing but the Blues : The Music and the Musicians edited by Lawrence Cohn

Land Where the Blues Began by Alan Lomax

The Tales of Uncle Remus: The Adventures of Brer Rabbit as told by Julius Lester

Videos

The Piano Lesson (Hallmark Hall of Fame, 1995) with Charles Dutton
(based on the play by August Wilson)

A Raisin in the Sun (1961) with Sidney Poitier (based on the play by Lorraine Hansberry)

Talk to Me (2007) with Don Cheadle

Cadillac Records (2008) with Beyoncé Knowles

The Tuskegee Airmen (1995) with Laurence Fishburne

Red Tails (2012) with Terrence Howard and Cuba Gooding Jr.

A Soldier's Story (1984) with Denzel Washington (based on the play by Charles Fuller)

Pride and Perseverance: The Story of the Negro Leagues (documentary, 2014)

The Bingo Long Traveling All-Stars and Motor Kings (1976) with Billy Dee Williams

42 (2013)

Race (2016)

Remember the Titans (2000) with Denzel Washington

The Hurricane (1999) with Denzel Washington

The Jackie Robinson Story (1950) with Jackie Robinson & Ruby Dee

YouTube

The Jackie Robinson Story (1950 Movie) with Jackie Robinson and Ruby Dee
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fWreUB9RWgE>

Jesse Owens Wins 100m Olympic Gold in front of Hitler at 1936 Olympics
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PRkeaheI2HM>

Websites

Understanding August Wilson, revised edition by Mary Bogumil

<http://www.sc.edu/uscpres/books/2011/3979.html>

Find out more about African American History in Indiana including politics and sports:

<http://www.indianahumanities.org/pdf/ThisFarByFaith.pdf>

Blacks in politics:

<http://www.oxfordaasc.com/public/features/archive/1008/index.jsp>

1951-2001

http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m1355/is_22_100/ai_80162969/?tag=content;col1

Images of August Wilson, actors, directors, production photos, his second wife and second daughter, production art, etc.

http://www.google.com/search?q=August+Wilson&hl=en&rls=com.microsoft:en-us&prmd=imvnsb&tbm=isch&tbo=u&source=univ&sa=X&ei=z4IDT8XTBY_UiALi1cnJDg&ved=0CEAQsAQ&biw=1067&bih=559

Black Theatre

<http://www.britannica.com/blackhistory/article-232365>

<http://www.britannica.com/blackhistory/article-9015516>

Negro League Baseball

<http://www.negroleaguebaseball.com/>

Negro League Baseball Museum

<https://www.nlbm.com/>

Negro League Baseball Museum

<https://www.nlbm.com/>

Glossary

A&P

a Northeast United States supermarket chain founded in the 1870s as the Great Atlantic and Pacific Tea Company. By the 1950s this low-cost store chain were located in mostly older urban areas, <http://www.groceteria.com/store/national-chains/ap/ap-history/>

Armageddon

According to the Book of Revelation, Armageddon will be the site of the gathering of armies for a battle during the End Times.

Aunt Jemima

A brand of pancake mix that debuted in 1889. Aunt Jemima syrup was introduced in 1966. The name derives from a stereotypical African American character in minstrel shows.

banty rooster

A smaller, more aggressive rooster. Bantam is a smaller variety of poultry.

bunt

In baseball, to gently tap a pitched ball with the bat without swinging, in an attempt to make the ball more difficult to field.

Braves

A Major League Baseball team based in Atlanta since 1966; at the time of the play they were based in Milwaukee.

commissioner

A person commissioned or invested with the authority to act officially, as a representative in charge of a department, district, or association—in this context, the person who runs the sanitation department where Troy works.

Courier

The Pittsburgh *Courier* was an African-American newspaper published from 1907 until 1966; one of the most significant black newspapers in the United States.

Crawford Grill

at the time of the play, a renowned jazz club in the Hill District

Frigidaire

a refrigerator

full count

In baseball, a full count is when a batter has three balls and two strikes, the maximum that can be achieved before a plate appearance ends.

Gabriel

In the Abrahamic religions, an angel who typically serves as a messenger from God

Goodyears

tires

Green Tree

a suburb of Pittsburgh

Japs

a derogatory reference to people of Japanese nationality

the Judgement

In Christian theology, the final and eternal judgement by God of every nation.

Joe Louis

Professional boxer Joe Louis (1914-1981) was the World Heavyweight Champion from 1937 to 1949, and is considered to be one of the greatest heavyweight boxers of all time.

Mobile

Mobile is the third largest city in the state of Alabama, located in the southwestern part of the state. It was the site of many important events during the Civil Rights Movement.

numbers game

a form of lottery played mostly in poor neighborhoods, wherein a bettor attempts to pick three digits to match those that will be randomly drawn the following day

Pirates

The Pittsburgh Pirates were founded in 1881. They have won five World Series to date.

plumb

in this context, the word means *exactly*

ride the blinds

To ride the front platform of a baggage car on a passenger train as a means to ride without paying the fare.

sickle

A short-handed farming tool with a semicircular blade, used for cutting grain, lopping, or trimming. Death is often pictured as a figure robed in black holding a sickle.

spikes

Specialized shoes with thin, pointed spikes on their soles to enhance athletic performance.

Saint Peter

One of the Twelve Apostles of Jesus Christ; Christian tradition often depicts him as guarding the gates of heaven to monitor admittance.

Tallahassee

The capital of the state of Florida

Uncle Remus

Fictional: a kind, old former slave and narrator of African American folktales compiled by author Joel Chandler Harris (1848-1908).

workhouse

a prison in which petty offenders are expected to work

Yankees

one of two Major League Baseball teams in New York.

*David Alan Anderson
in Fences, 2016.*



Going to the Theatre: Audience Role & Responsibility

You, the audience, are one of the most important parts of any performance. Experiencing the theatre is a group activity shared not only with the actors, but also with the people sitting around you. Your attention and participation help the actors perform better, and allow the rest of the audience to enjoy the show. Here are a few simple tips to help make each theatre experience enjoyable for everyone:



Leave mp3 players, cameras, mobile phones, and other distracting and noise-making electronic devices at home.

You may think texting is private, but the light and the motion are very annoying to those around you and on stage. Do not text during the performance.

Food and drink must stay in the lobby.

The house lights dimming and going out signal the audience to get quiet and settle in your seats: the play is about to begin.

Don't talk with your neighbors during the play. It distracts people around you and the actors on stage. Even if you think they can't hear you, they can.

Never throw anything onto the stage. People could be injured.

Remain in your seat during the play. Use the restroom before or after the show.

Focus all your attention on the play to best enjoy the experience. Listen closely to the dialogue and sound effects, and look at the scenery, lights, and costumes. These elements all help to tell the story.

Get involved in the story. Laugh, cry, sigh, gasp—whatever the story draws from you. The more emotionally involved you are, the more you will enjoy the play.

Remain at your seat and applaud during the curtain call because this is part of the performance too. It gives you a chance to recognize a job well done and the actors a moment to thank you for your attention.