



**AMERICAN PLAYERS THEATRE**  
**PRESENTS**

**AUGUST WILSON'S**  
**FENCES**

**2019 STUDY GUIDE**

American Players Theatre / PO Box 819 / Spring Green, WI 53588  
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# August Wilson's *Fences*

## 2019 STUDY GUIDE

Penumbra Theatre Company's 2008 *Fences* Study Guide by Sarah Bellamy  
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APT's *Fences* Production Section written by Malek Mayo.

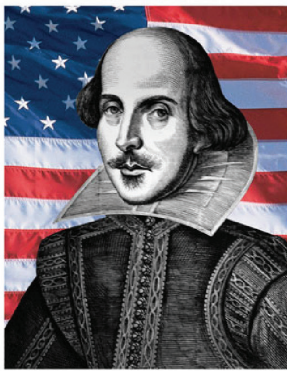
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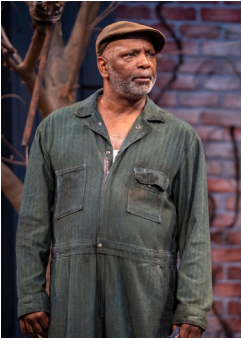
Penumbra Theatre Company occupies a very unique place within American society, and by extension of that, the world. Penumbra was borne out of the Black Arts Movement, a time charged by civic protest and community action. An artist making art by, for and about the black community was charged with merging aesthetic (artistic) principles with ethical (moral) ones. Subsequently, in this historical and political context, art had an agenda to strive toward social change. African American artists were part of, and greatly influenced, the social currents that carried people from their homes, schools and places of worship to the streets.

Bonding artistic interpretation with civic responsibility engenders an important kind of creative dissonance, a harmony of balance. It creates something neither art nor civic action could do alone. This is mission driven art, informed by a black ethos and aesthetic, which can adequately illuminate our experience. Ensemble Theatre in that context is the creation of a community of people committed to the telling of a story that acknowledges the experience of everyone involved. This kind of art demands that each audience member recognize his or her place in relation to the art. When that happens, we begin to think about ourselves as interactive forces in a greater social context. Our own agency becomes clearer to us; our choices and reactions start to make sense within a broader, more nuanced environment. We begin to see that others have lived with similar issues, and that their perspectives have great potential to enrich our experience and help us problem-solve. This kind of art creates and sustains community. It encourages coalition.

The function of an Education and Outreach Program inside an institution such as Penumbra Theatre Company is to use informed discussion and interdisciplinary tools to unpack the issues stimulated by the drama. Just as an actor must learn lines and blocking before interpreting a character, we offer our audiences the practical tools so that they may respond to the art both critically and creatively. It is our job to push conversation, critical analysis, and commentary beyond emotion toward solution.

We hope to create space for the themes inspired by the drama to take root and blossom. Penumbra invites audiences to participate in the art and social action, by using our Education and Outreach tools to locate their contribution, their voice, within the larger human story we tell over and over again. We love. We fail. We begin anew. Over and over, told by countless tongues, embodied by some of the finest actors and carried in the hearts of some of the most committed audience members; we speak our human lessons through the prism of the African American experience.

## Who's Who in *Fences*



**Troy Maxson (David Alan Anderson)**  
Early 50s. Legendary Negro League baseball player, now working as a garbage collector. Troy is a story-teller. He is at once jovial and loving and brash and overbearing. A complicated man embittered by the racism he has experienced throughout his life.



**Rose Maxson (Karen Aldridge)**  
Mid 40s. Troy's wife. A strong, supportive woman who is fiercely protective of her husband and son. A loving presence that counterbalances Troy's ferocity for life, Rose mothers almost everyone around her. She is quiet and laughs easily. A gentle spirit.



**Jim Bono (Bryant Louis Bentley)**  
Early 50s. Troy's very good friend. The men met while in prison and Bono, as he is known, has stayed with Troy through his legendary days in baseball and today works beside him as a garbage man. Like brothers, the two men love each other deeply.



**Cory Maxson (Yao Dogbe)**  
Late teens. Troy and Rose's son. Cory is a natural athlete like his father, eager to prove his salt to the legendary Troy Maxson. He has been playing football, hoping to catch the eyes of college recruiters, offering him the educational opportunities his illiterate father never had.



**Lyons Maxson (Jamal James)**  
Mid 30s. Troy's eldest son from a previous relationship. Lyons is a musician who cannot seem to keep a job. He is full of laughter and uses his charming personality to quell his father's quick anger. A grown man, he lives with his girlfriend nearby.



**Gabriel Maxson (Gavin Lawrence)**  
Early 40s. Troy's brother. After being severely injured with a head trauma in World War II, Gabriel is left with a childlike innocence and a deep sense of concern for his older brother. He believes with every fiber in his being that he is the archangel Gabriel.



**Raynell Maxson (Taressa Marie Hennes, left. Phoebe Warner, right.)**

Nine years old. Troy's daughter and youngest child from an another relationship. After Alberta, the woman with whom Troy has had an affair dies in childbirth, Rose takes the baby in, and despite her husband's infidelity, raises her as her own.



# About the Play

## SETTING (as written by the playwright)

The Hill District of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, 1957

The setting is the yard which fronts the only entrance to the Maxson household, an ancient two-story brick house set back off a small alley in a big-city neighborhood. The entrance to the house is gained by two or three steps leading to a wooden porch badly in need of paint.

A relatively recent addition to the house and running its full width, the porch lacks congruence. It is a sturdy porch with a flat roof. One or two chairs of dubious value sit at one end where the kitchen window opens onto the porch. An old fashioned icebox stands silent guard and opposite end.

The yard is a small dirt yard, partially fenced (except during the last scene), with a wooden sawhorse, a pile of lumber, and other fence-building equipment off to the side. Opposite is a tree from which hangs a ball made of rags. A baseball bat leans against the tree. Two oil drums serve as garbage receptacles and sit near the house at right to complete the setting.

## SUMMARY

Every Friday, Troy Maxson and his friend, Jim Bono celebrate the end of the work week with drinks and conversation in Troy's back yard. The two men are garbage collectors, and Troy has asked their boss why the black employees aren't allowed to drive the garbage trucks, only to lift the garbage. Conversation moves to a woman Bono believes Troy was flirting with at the bar, and is concerned that Troy is cheating on his wife, Rose. Troy and Rose's son, Cory, has been recruited by a college football team. Troy played Baseball in the Negro Leagues, but never got a chance to play in the Majors because by the time they allowed black players, Troy had aged out. Troy tells a story of his battle with death, which captivates Bono. Lyons, Troy's son from his first marriage, shows up and asks Troy for money. Rose reminds Troy about the fence she's asked him to finish building.

Cory comes home, and works on the fence, but breaks the news to Troy that he has given away his job at the local grocery store during the football season. Cory begs Troy to let him play because a coach from North Carolina is coming all the way to Pittsburgh to see him. Troy refuses and demands Cory to get his job back.

In the next scene, Troy and Rose celebrate, as he's been promoted to truck driver - the first black garbage truck driver in the city. Bono and Troy reminisce about their fathers and their childhood experiences of leaving home in the south and moving north. Cory comes home enraged after finding out that Troy told the football coach that Cory may not play on the team. Troy warns Cory that his outburst is "strike one," against him.

Troy has bailed his brother Gabriel out of jail. As Bono and Troy work on the fence, Bono explains to Troy and Cory that Rose wants the fence because she loves her family and wants to keep them together. He then confronts him about cheating on Rose. Troy admits that he's having an affair with Alberta, the woman they were discussing in Act 1. Bono goes home to his wife. Rose enters the yard, and Troy tells her about an incident with his brother, Gabriel, that has landed him in jail. There will be a hearing to determine if Gabriel will be forced to go back to the asylum. He then tells Rose about his affair. Rose accuses Troy of being a taker, and he grows enraged, grabbing Rose's arm and hurting her. Cory arrives and grabs Troy from behind. Troy calls "strike two" on Cory.

Six months later, Troy says he is going over to the hospital to see Alberta who went into labor early. Rose tells Troy that Gabriel has been taken away to the asylum because Troy couldn't read the papers and signed him away. Alberta had a baby girl but died during childbirth. Troy challenges Death to come and get him.

Troy brings home his baby, Raynell. Rose takes in Raynell as her own child, but refuses to be dutiful as Troy's wife, telling him, "You a womanless man."

On Troy's payday, Bono shows up unexpectedly. Things are strained between the two old friends, as they acknowledge how each man made good on a bet they'd made that if Troy finished the fence, Bono would buy his wife a new icebox. Bono leaves, promising emptily that the two will get together again soon.

Cory arrives, and father and son begin arguing. Troy insists that Cory leave the house and provide for himself. Cory brings up Troy's recent failings with Rose, and points out that the house and property should rightly be Gabriel's, as his government checks paid for most of the mortgage payments. Troy attacks Cory and they fight. Troy kicks Cory out of the house for good. After Cory leaves, Troy swings the baseball bat in the air, once again taunting Death.

Eight years later, Raynell plays in her newly planted garden. Troy has died from a heart attack, and Cory has returned home from the Marines to attend Troy's funeral. Lyons and Bono join Rose. But at the last minute, Cory tells Rose he won't attend. Rose tells Cory that not attending Troy's funeral does not make Cory a man. Raynell and Cory sing one of Troy's father's blues songs. Gabriel turns up, released (or escaped) from the hospital. Gabe blows his trumpet but no sound comes out. He tries again but the trumpet will not play. Disappointed and hurt, Gabriel dances. He makes a cry and the Heavens open wide. He says, "That's the way that goes," and the play ends.

# APT's Production of August Wilson's *Fences*

## BUILDING FENCES

By Malek Mayo, Assistant Director on APT's production of *Fences*

*"I think my plays offer [them] a different way to look at black Americans. For instance, in *Fences* they see a garbage man, a person they don't really look at, although they see a garbage man every day. By looking at Troy's life, they find out that the content of this black garbage man's life is affected by the same things—love, honor, beauty, betrayal, duty. Recognizing that these things are as much part of his life as theirs can affect how they think about and deal with black people in their lives."*

— August Wilson, excerpt from 1988 interview with journalist Bill Moyers

Written in 1985, *Fences* is the sixth play of August Wilson's 10-play American Century Cycle. Wilson depicts the lives of Black Americans with lyrical richness, theatrical compactness and emotional mass that presents the depth of their experiences in America. He describes universal truths about the fight for dignity, love, security and happiness in the face of overwhelming obstacles. Wilson tell his stories with a handsomeness to the language that asserts that black vernacular is its own grammar.

Wilson's work was heavily influenced by the Blues. He believed that Blues is a cultural expression and response to the struggles of the Black American experience. From the tranquility of Rose's voice to the wide range of pitches that Gabriel explores, each character in this production offers a musicality in their language. Gavin Lawrence, who plays Gabriel in APT's production, explains "August wrote from a musical place. Saying these words is like playing jazz. There is a theme, you improvise on the theme, and you come back to the theme."

Being in an outdoor thrust theatre, there were many battles that we overcame such as working against the sounds of the woods, the wild life and the wind. Originally a poet, Wilson is specific in all of his language, so our voice and text coach Michael Morgan worked individually with all of the actors to ensure that every word is heard and experienced by all audience members.

The Maxsons' Hill District home is bordered with various fences that keep some out and keep some in. Some fences are constructed to trap the characters' hopes and dreams, while others stand as guards against all that is "the devil" to the Maxson family. *Fences* metaphorically barring Black athletes from professional sports weren't broken down until the end of Troy's Negro Baseball League career. En route to Cory's dream of being a professional athlete, there stood a fence in North Carolina with "Jim Crow" painted across it. Rose built a fence to protect her love for Troy for the sake of her family. Gabriel has fought off hellhounds to lead Troy past another fence: the one that separates this life from the next.

### Significance of the Hill District in *Fences*

August Wilson spent the first 13 years in this neighborhood with his mother and five siblings, crammed into two rooms. His youth was shaped here: his mother's guidance, family gatherings, family fights, neighborhood



Gabriel (Gavin Lawrence), who suffers from the effects of a head injury, with Rose (Karen Aldridge).

# APT's Production of August Wilson's *Fences*

stories, and his yearning for knowledge and understanding of the world around him. In his early years, Wilson would listen to many stories of people in his neighborhood, which would eventually inspire characters in his productions. In *Fences*, the character of Troy Maxson was inspired by a Black boxing legend, Charley Burley, who lived across the street. Burley was a garbage man, a late middleweight boxer who often fought and defeated much larger men, including the great Archie Moore, but was never granted a shot at the title. After Wilson's father left him when he was five, Burley became a positive male image for him. In one interview, Wilson remembered, "I wanted to grow up and dress like him. He wore those Stetson hats and things of that sort, and I couldn't wait until I got to be a man to be like Charley Burley."

## The Hill District in 1957

"...approximately 90 percent of the buildings in the area are sub-standard... and so there would be no social loss if these were all destroyed." — City Councilman George E. Evans in 1943

Pittsburgh was in search of a place to build the Civic Arena and chose to demolish the Lower Hill District in 1956 to create a building site. One-third of the neighborhood was suddenly marked for demolition, and its residents were evicted. Ultimately, the residents had no option other than to leave when the time came. This decision was seen attempt to get rid of any signs of black people and black culture.



Stunning scenic design by Shaun Motley.

Part of the beauty of this production's set design is that it's representative of any home in the Hill District during that time. From the broken icebox to the slamming screen door, our set designer Shaun Motley wanted everything on stage to model a typical black household in the neighborhood at that time. The Maxson yard is filled with motifs that represent the characters of the play, particularly the ever-present baseball hanging from the three. The scenery shifts slightly prior to the final scene to show the passage of time. Our design team was very specific about what items Rose would keep in the yard after Troy's death.

## Troy and Rose

In many productions of *Fences*, Troy is portrayed as an angry, bitter man who is tyrannical with his wife. We didn't want that in this production, so were very careful to find opportunities to show Troy's potential for love, compassion and empathy. For example, after Troy agrees to pay for half of the TV that Cory wants in Act 1,



Rose (Karen Aldridge) and Troy (David Alan Anderson) in one of their more tender moments.

Scene 3, there's a moment we added where Troy smiles at Cory when Cory isn't looking. We wanted the audience to see Troy as a man who gives his sweat and blood to make sure his family has a roof over their heads, food to eat and clothes on their backs, as well as have some small things to bring them happiness.

To help understand Troy's relationship with his family, we look at his past and upbringing. Once a great in the Negro Baseball League, Troy overcomes hardships and rises to a new form of greatness by becoming the first black trash truck driver in the city. As a child, Troy's father saw him as a worker instead of his son, and his mother escaped the violent house, leaving Troy and his many siblings behind.



## APT's Production of August Wilson's *Fences*



Cory (Yao Dogbe) and Troy's relationship is fraught, though the love is clear.

With violence and abandonment as his primary introduction to parenting, Troy breaks his back to be the best father and husband that he can be. And because of the racism that he experienced in his life, especially during his baseball career, he fights against Cory going to college to pursue football in an attempt to keep Cory from trusting his future to untrustworthy white people.

Providing a mirror image of Troy's parenting style, we were interested in exploring the many ways that Rose is a strong, fun woman. We wanted her entrance to any scene to demand a specific energy and respect from the other characters. In terms of blocking, Rose exemplifies her strength and stability by limiting her movement. We found her strength in the

sacrifice of her life's desires to be the best wife and mother she possibly could, offering her family the best love she could. Rose builds fences to keep her family united. She gives Lyons money when he comes around for his weekly visits, and she backs Cory when Troy tries to dissuade him from playing football. Though Rose bends over backwards for the well being of her family, she also refuses to be anyone's doormat. Rose has a still strength, and she won't hesitate to set anyone straight when they get out of line. This house would not be a home without Rose.

### The Context of The Negro Baseball League in *Fences*

Josh Gibson, one of the greatest hitters of all time, was the second Negro League player inducted into the National Baseball Hall of Fame. Troy's character in *Fences*, also a former Negro League player, is bitter how he, Gibson and other Negro League stars ended up, as the play says, "without a pot to piss in or a window to throw it out," after the integration of Major League Baseball led to the Negro Leagues' shutdown.

African American Hall of Famer Andrew "Rube" Foster founded the Negro National League in 1920. The sport's health seemingly stronger than ever, an estimated 3 million fans watched the Negro League teams play in 1942, with its World Series revived that September. By that point, the push to integrate major league baseball was slowly gaining steam. In 1947, the reintegration started with the signing of Kansas City Monarchs' Jackie Robinson to the Brooklyn Dodgers. Robinson became the first 20th Century black baseball player allowed in the all-white professional league. This was soon followed by the signing of other leading Negro League players, and the Negro Baseball Leagues quickly and quietly ended.



Troy's love for baseball remains obvious, even through his bitterness at being overlooked due to his race.

# Tools for Teaching

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The following are a series of questions you may use to prompt discussion, critical analysis or dialogue about this play. They may be used either before or after the play, either to guide audiences toward specific issues as they watch or, to stimulate conversation about topical issues afterward.

Penumbra Theatre Company now offers Lesson Plans that use the script, the production, and the study guide to investigate specific themes! Developed by high school teachers and curriculum consultants Kimberly Colbert and Kaye Peters, these questions are intended to meet the state standards for High School Language Arts and Literacy set by the Board of Education. (Grades 9 through 12). Each plan can run from approximately 15 to 45 minutes for discussion. Please contact Penumbra Theatre's Education Director for more details: sarah.bellamy@penumbratheatre.org

## **A Guide for Teaching August Wilson's Fences**

### Overview

This guide provides a broad framework in which teachers may anchor their own classroom practice. For easy reference, lessons have been divided into five strands (mythology, literary study, themes, art and historical context). Teachers may choose to follow one strand for the unit or weave together elements and/or lessons from the various strands. A broad essential question for the entire Fences unit is suggested, as well as more specific essential questions aligned with strands (highlighted below). The essential question provides a foundation for study, with guiding questions for study embedded in each lesson which will allow for a range of critical thinking and analysis within both English/language arts and social studies content areas. Anchor, or suggested, lessons are provided for each strand along with resource readings and classroom tools we have found effective in our own classrooms.

The suggested lessons are designed to meet high-school level Minnesota Reading and Literature and Writing standards and Minnesota Social Studies standards for Institutions and Traditions in Society. The standards are noted by the possible lessons in boldface type. Numbers and letters refer to the specific standard.

### **LA - is Language Arts standards SS - is Social Studies standards**

Both the Contemporary Literary Criticism printed by Gale Group and offered as an online database and The Cambridge Companion to August Wilson, edited by Christopher Bigsby, are valuable resources on Wilson's body of work and are cited in the commentary and essays that follow.

**Materials:**

- Dictionaries (at least one per group)
- Copies of *Fences* (at least one per group)
- Notebook paper and writing utensils for each student

**Possible Lesson Outline:**

1. Set up expert groups. To look at first the denotative and then the connotative meaning of these words, set up groups for a jigsaw as follows. The first “expert” groups will be a little large, but this arrangement will allow for smaller groups in the more significant “teaching” groups. Everyone must take notes in both groups. It is critical that everyone take notes in expert groups because they will have to teach the material in the second part of the activity. Sample notes will be collected for teacher review and evaluation at the end of the activity.
  - First will be the expert groups. Each of four expert groups will be responsible for looking up the denotative meaning of the words “home” and “fences” as follows and brainstorming a web of literal ways in which the term is used:
    - Group 1:** Home in the common sense.
    - Group 2:** Home as it is used in baseball.
    - Group 3:** Fences in the common sense.
    - Group 4:** Fences in baseball.
  - Students will count off by 4, random selection. These will be the expert groups.
  - Students should move to areas of the room designated for their group.
2. Students will look up the words and create webs. Then they should look at the following list of references from the play and connect these references to ideas they already placed on the web or add to their webs.

<b>Home</b>		<b>Fences</b>	
p. 9	“home runs” (Bono)	p. 21	“Jesus be a fence” (Rose)
p. 34	“Hell, I can hit forty-three homeruns right now!” (Troy)	p. 24	“put up the fence” (Bono)
p. 40	“You all line up at the door with your hands out” (Troy)	p. 30	“you supposed to be putting up this fence” (Rose)
		p. 31	“help me with this fence” (Troy)

3. In expert groups, students discuss and take notes on how the meaning of these two concepts take on metaphorical significance in the context of the text.

4. Set up teaching groups: In teaching groups, students will share what they learned and discussed in their expert groups. Both groups who looked at “home” should present, followed by both “fences” groups.
  - Students will count off by the number of students that are in the smallest group. If there are extras in another group, they can be distributed among the reformed “teaching” groups. Relocated to designated area of room. **Students should write both their teaching and expert group numbers on their notes.**
5. Group presentations.
6. Group discussion. Drawing on their presentations, students will discuss and take notes on the following questions (write on board or overhead):
  - What does “home” mean to Troy?
  - How does the Maxson home relate to “home” in baseball?
  - What do you believe is the purpose of the fence Rose wants around the Maxson yard?
  - What is the objective of a hitter in baseball when he “hits for the fences”?
7. Select one person from each discussion group to turn in their notes, balancing between the four expert groups to get a representative sample. All students should keep notes.

**Preparatory set (Days 3-4):**

Refer students to their notes from **Days 1-2** and give students five minutes to review. Follow with short discussion on what they find significant about the concepts of “home” and “fences.”

**Lesson Outline:**

1. Students should return to their teaching groups and look at the following text from Act II. What are the metaphorical implications raised?
  - p. 60: Troy and Bono discuss building the fence and what material is needed.
  - p. 61: “I don’t see why Mama want a fence around the yard nowadays.” (Cory)
  - p. 61: “some people build fences to . . . keep people in.” (Bono)
  - p. 64: “I wanna see you put that fence up by yourself.” (Bono)
  - p. 68-9: “I can step out of this house . . .” (Troy)
  - p. 69: Troy’s baseball analogy explaining his attraction to Alberta. “safe” at home.
  - p. 70: “steal second” (Troy)
  - p. 77: “build me a fence” (Troy)
  - p. 79: “homeless” Troy brings Raynell home and begs Rose to take her in.

- p. 94: “He wasn’t satisfied hitting in the seats. . . he want to hit it over everything!” (Lyons speaking about Troy, his father, when he played baseball.)
- p. 95-6: Troy died swinging the bat as Rose was going into house. (Rose)

2. Metaphors can reveal the complexity or duality of a concept. Consider the dual meaning of “home” and “fences” in *Fences* and discuss the following questions:
- What Troy Maxon “safe at home”?
  - How does the restriction implied by the fence Troy builds around the Maxon house compare to his goal as a ballplayer?
  - How do these two metaphors develop your awareness of Troy Maxon’s fate as an African American man?

**Reflection:**

Students should write a short reflection, including how the metaphors helped them to understand Troy Maxon and the meaning of the play.

**Work Cited in Literary Study Strand**

Koprince, Susan. “Baseball as History and Myth in August Wilson’s *Fences*.”  
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## Themes: Responsibility

**Essential Question:** What is our responsibility to ourselves vs. families and society?

At the heart of *Fences* is a question that transcends race: “What does a man owe to his family, and how much can a man, . . . permit himself to ignore duty in order to pursue more self-interested objectives?” (Blumenthal). Troy Maxon, the protagonist of Wilson’s play, through his diction, repeatedly stresses the virtue of responsibility to his sons and wife. “I done learned my mistake and learned to do what’s right by it. You still trying to get something for nothing. Life don’t owe you nothing. You owe it to yourself,” he tells his oldest son, Lyons, early in the play (18; 1).

Yet Lyons, in his quest to be a musician, and Troy, through his philandering, show that responsibility is easier to talk about than uphold. In what could be the climax of the play, Troy squares off with his wife, Rose, after informing her that he has gotten another woman pregnant. In explaining why he slept with Alberta, he tells Rose “I done locked myself into a pattern trying to take care of you all that I forgot about myself” (69; 2).

As Blumenthal notes in her essay, the question of responsibility has more challenges when the individual is an African-American man in pre-Civil Rights America, but Troy and Rose’s debate over responsibility at the beginning of act 2 also has a universal dimension that begs the question of to whom and for whom we must be responsible.

The following lesson is designed for the end of the play to help students pull together concepts and themes within the play and support them with text.

### **Fish Bowl Discussion: To Whom Are We Most Responsible?**

Sample Lesson: 2 days

**LA Standards: I.D. 1, 13, 14.**

**SS (Peoples and Cultures) Standards:**

- A. Identifying societal concepts that influence the interaction among individuals, groups, and institutions in society.
- B. Examining tension between individuality and conformity.

### **Guiding Questions:**

1. What is our responsibility to ourselves?
2. What is a parents’ responsibility to his or her children?
3. What is a husband’s or wife’s responsibility to his or her spouse?
4. What is our responsibility to our community or society?
5. What do we do when these responsibilities are in conflict?

### **Preparatory Set:**

As noted above, this lesson is designed to fall at the end of the unit. Begin with a journal question for students: “To whom do we most owe responsibility? Ourselves, our family or our community?” Follow with informal discussion.

**Materials:**

Notepaper and writing utensils.

For day 2, room needs to be organized with four chairs at center, in a circle and facing each other.

Other chairs will be lined up behind the four chairs for supporting group members.

**Lesson Outline:****Day 1:**

1. Set up lesson: Students will debate the question posed for journal, using text from the play to support their arguments. The first day will be used for four groups (to reduce sizes of groups, break family into parents/children and husband/wife as in guiding questions) to find text to support their arguments in favor of self, child, spouse or society. The second day will be a fish bowl discussion where a representative from each group will argue the group's position and try to persuade the others, using specific text from the play to support their position. Other members of the same group may tag out the speaker (details below).
2. Students will vote with feet, moving to designated areas of room as to whether they think their greatest responsibility is to themselves, their children, their spouse or their society.
3. If group numbers are significantly uneven, teacher should adjust or, if very lopsided, teacher can randomly assign groups to argue a position whether they believe it or not. (Good practice for seeing an issue from another's perspective.)
4. Give students remainder of the hour to look up text together and build their argument. Everyone should take notes both in groups and during discussion (could collect at end, with reflection). Students should be encouraged to also review play on their own for homework.

**Day 2:**

1. Set up discussion: Speakers representing each group will sit in center four desks (the fish bowl). Each speaker must be allowed to talk at least once. Once they have spoken, however, a member of his/her group may tag them to take over the chair and speak. Speakers may return to the center. All speakers **MUST** cite the play in supporting their argument and everyone must listen and take notes. Points may be given for notes, with extra credit for speaking, or as teacher sees fit.
2. Give groups five minutes to review arguments and text and any additional information. Choose first speaker.
3. Fish bowl discussion, as set out in 1. 20-30 minutes.
4. Students will write a reflection summarizing their position, given what they have heard and citing how the play supports their final position. They may also reflect on how they arrived at their position.
5. Hand in reflections (notes optional) to teacher.

## Themes: African American Identity

**Essential Question:** What are the effects of institutionalized racism? What is institutionalized racism's legacy on the individual, families and society? On someone who is trying to define him/herself?

**Standards:** I.D.4, I.D.5, I.D.7, I.D.9, I.D.10, I.D.11, I.D.13, I.D.14

Several literary elements including setting, plot, and diction help to define the African American identity in August Wilson's *Fences*. Students will explore several devices in order to explore the way in which Wilson deals with the central idea of African American identity.

Racism is a common theme in August Wilson's plays chronicling the African American experience. (Political Science)

**Racism:** discrimination against a group of people based on their distinct physical characteristics and common ancestry.

**Institutionalized Racism:** racism that is codified through government or other societal structures either explicitly or implicitly.

### Guiding Questions:

1. What does the setting of the play suggest about the Maxon's place in society? Why?
2. What evidence of Jim Crow and institutionalized racism is present within the play?
3. What factors blocked Troy Maxon's opportunities to play professional baseball?
4. Why can Troy not drive a garbage truck?
5. What is the significance of Troy winning the right to drive a truck?
6. How do Troy's experiences affect his relationships with his family and friends?
7. Why does Troy oppose Cory playing football to get a college scholarship?
8. How are the larger effects of Troy's experiences with racism presented within the play?

### Examples of institutionalized racism in *Fences*:

- Baseball
- Garbage collection and driving
- Troy's put downs of his sons' ambitions
- Troy's desire to feel unstuck

### Textual Examples (for teacher)

- Wilson's introduction to the play.
- **Act I, Scene I;** conversation between Troy, Rose and Bono.

TROY: I told that boy about that football stuff. The white man ain't gonna let him get nowhere with that football. (p. 8)



- **Act I, Scene I;** conversation between Troy, Rose and Bono.

ROSE: Times have changed since you was playing baseball, Troy. That was before the war. Times have changed a lot since then.

TROY: How in hell they done changed?

ROSE: They got lots of colored boys playing ball now. Baseball and football.

BONO: You right about that, Rose. Times have changed, Troy. You just come along too early.

TROY: There ought not never have been no time called too early! (p. 9)

- **Act I, Scene I.** Troy’s story about not being able to get credit to buy furniture. (p. 14-15)

- **Act I, Scene I.**

LYONS: Aw, Pop, you know I can’t find no decent job. Where am I gonna get a job at? You know I can’t get no job. . . . I don’t wanna be carrying nobody’s rubbish. (p. 17)

- **Act I, Scene I.**

TROY: I done learned my mistake and learned to do what’s right by it. You still trying to get something for nothing. Life don’t owe you nothing. You owe it to yourself. (p. 18)

### **Materials:**

Large sheets of paper, one for each guiding question.

Markers, one for each member of cooperative group.

### **“Chalk Talk” Discussion:**

1. Divide class into eight groups – one group for each guiding question.
2. Instruct students to discuss their guiding question on, marking answers and textual evidence on the large white paper.
3. Let them know the exercise will be timed.
4. After the allotted time, ask students to pass the paper to the next group.
5. Students should review the new question and answers and respond in writing to points that resonate with them by drawing a line from the comment to another part of the paper and writing their response.
6. Allow about six minutes for responses and have students pass their papers to the next group.
7. Continue to do this until each group receives their original paper again.
8. Briefly review guiding questions and answers.

*Note: (Chalk Talk is a strategy developed by Brown University’s Arts Literacy Project. More information can be found at [artslit.org](http://artslit.org), “Handbook” section.)*

**Seminar:** Students will discuss the **essential questions**. Questions should be assigned as written homework before the seminar is held.

**Procedures:** Set up the room in a way that allows students to have a large-group discussion as well as provide a place for those who come to class unprepared, to finish their work.

Check student's homework as they enter the room. Send students who come prepared to a place in the discussion circle. Others should take a seat in the other part of the classroom and finish their homework. They may join the circle when they are finished.

Review ground rules for seminar:

- no talking over the discussion
- no talking under the discussion (e.g. whispering) or having side conversations
- students should raise their hands to comment
- students should try to speak in full sentences and/or paragraphs (to practice communicating complete thoughts)
- students should refer to each other by name
- the teacher facilitates only when necessary; the discussion belongs to the students.

Begin the seminar by allowing each student in the circle to answer one of the questions. This way no one dominates and student who are more shy are forced to participate. You can open the discussion for further comments after the round robin has finished. At this point, the teacher steps in only to remind students of ground rules, ask for textual evidence or briefly jump-start silence. In general, however, students can be trusted to fill pregnant pauses.

When you begin the response part of the discussion, read the essential question and step back to let the students take over. Every once in awhile it might be necessary to call on people who are not responding to draw them into the discussion.

Continue to answer the questions throughout the class period. You might want to debrief the process or have kids respond to the process itself on paper before they leave.

### **Work Cited in Themes Section**

Blumenthal, Anna S. "More stories Than the Devil Got Sinners': Troy's Stories in August Wilson's Fences." American Drama 9, No. 2. Spring 2002. 74-96. 28 June 2008.

<http://galenet.galegroup.com/servlet/GLD/hits>.

## Art and Arts Literacy

**Essential Question:** How does art help us to see and understand ourselves and the role we play in shaping society?

**Standards:** D4, 5, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 14.

As an artist, August Wilson credits the influence of a number of artistic forms that helped him weave together his complex account of African American life. In this unit, students will explore some of the artistic forms that make up the warp and weft of Wilson's work. They will also study the role of the artist in addressing issues of identity and the way in which art shapes the world in which they live.

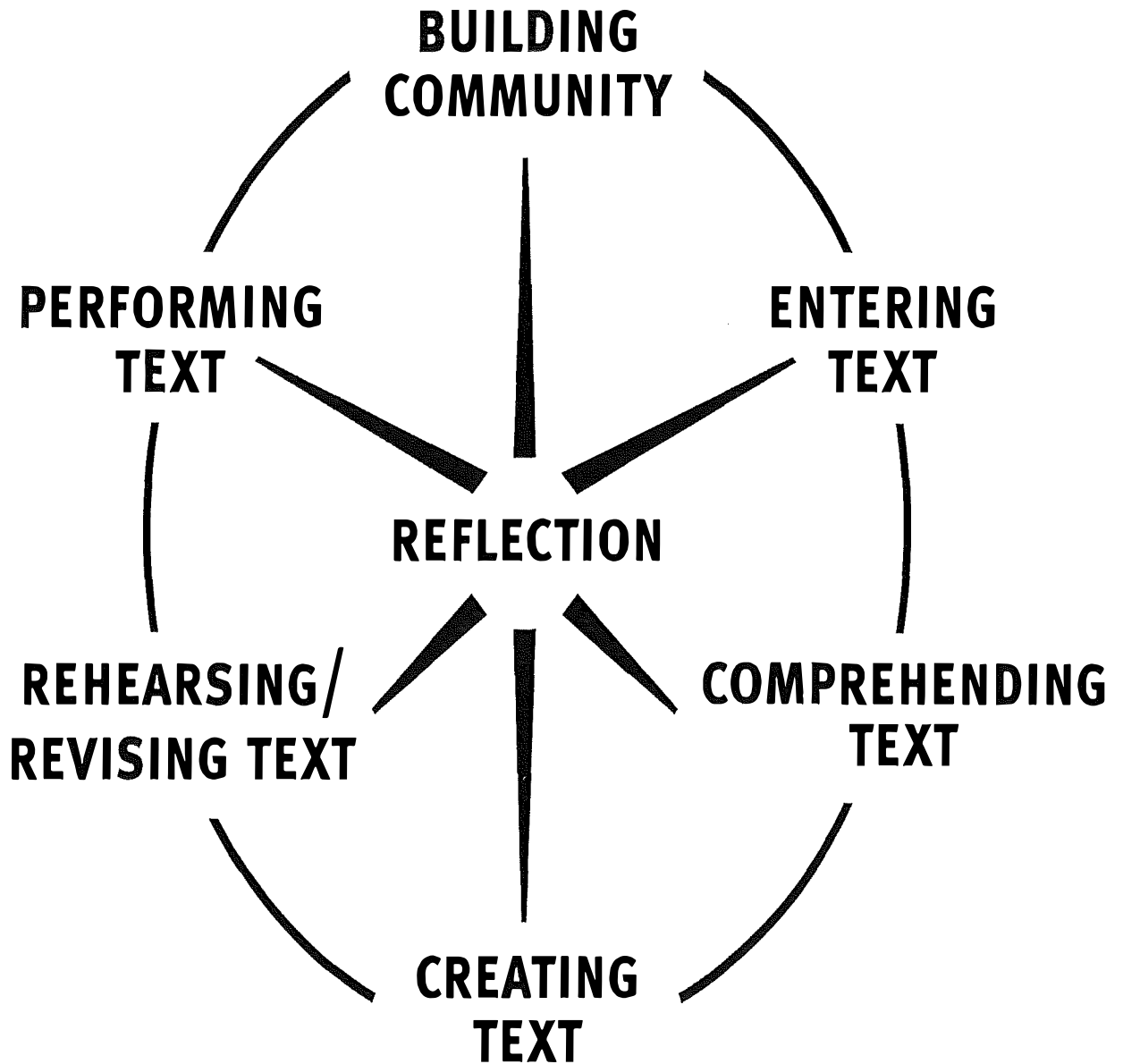
"I stand myself and my art squarely on the self-defining ground of the slave quarters, and find the ground to be hallowed and made fertile by the blood and bones of the men and women who can be described as warriors on the cultural battlefield that affirmed their self-worth." (Elam, PAGE)

"There ought never have been no time called too early." (Troy Maxon, *Fences*, Act 1, Scene 1; p. 16)

*Note: Brown University's Arts Literacy Project developed methods for approaching literacy through the performing and visual arts. Arts Literacy provides a way to meaningfully incorporate the arts into lesson plans. The method is based on a cycle – The Performance Cycle -- which allows students to encounter the text in a variety of ways. As students continue to study text using arts literacy they are brought deeper into words and meaning, while at the same time create their own art. At the center of the cycle is reflection, a time to think about not only what they have learned, but the way in which they have learned it. (For more details see "handbook" on [artslit.org](http://artslit.org))*



# The Performance Cycle



## Exercise: Community Building--Human Atom

- **Structure: investigating *Fences* through African American poetry.** This lesson can be used as a preparation to reading the play. For this activity the teacher should remain out of the activity on the side of the room.

### Materials:

Music

CD player

Copies of the following texts: (available at end of section)

DuBois, W.E.B. "My Country 'Tis of Thee."

Giovanni, Nikki. "Dreams."

Hughes, Langston. "I, Too."

Wilson, August. *Fences* excerpt Act I; Scene I

**Preparation:** Mapping out the various phrases you will use throughout this activity is important. Read through the text and think of different situations you can take the students through that give a feel for the characters and their dilemmas. Write down specific phrases from the text you can use after, "Walk as if you . . ." For instance, using a phrase from the poem, "Dreams" by Nikki Giovanni, you might say "Walk as if you grew and matured and became more sensible."

Also, develop a list of words that capture the essence of the play to create statues around. For *Fences* these words might include: **equality**, **oppression**, and **dream**. These words incorporate central ideas from both the play and the poetry. You also might find critical images and phrases from the texts for statues, such as "I am the darker brother," from Langston Hughes' poem "I, Too."

**Description:** Students walk around a space and inhabit different physicalities and emotions. There are many variations of this activity – some are designed to build community, and some to enter text. Often, teachers begin with the community-building variations to warm students up before starting to add in themes, characters, and quotes from the text. Thus, Human Atom can help you to achieve multiple purposes.

**Procedure:** The basic movement of this activity is simple. Students should walk around the space and keep the room balanced. Choose a point at the center of the room and point out that it is the "Nucleus." All of the students in the room are the "electrons;" they will walk around the center of the nucleus, walk to a far point in the room, back to the nucleus, and then back out to another far point in the room. If the room is large and there are only a few participants, delineate a smaller space with chairs or tape.

Another option for walking around the room is for participants to picture a shape in their head and to imagine that shape is taped onto the floor around the entire room. They can trace the shape as they walk throughout the room.

During the activity it is important that none of the students talk to each other or make physical contact unless instructed. Ask the students to move around the room in random patterns, they often want to move in a continuous circle.

Once the activity begins, teachers can mix any of the following activities:

**Freeze:** “When I say the word **freeze**, everyone in the room should freeze and not move any part of the body, including eyes and fingers.” This can be a good option to regain control of the activity or to use for transitions.

**Friendship:** “When I say the word **friendship**, everyone should introduce themselves to one another.” Try it also in slow motion and fast forward, with the participants introducing themselves to new people each time.

**Situations:** Walk the participants through situations related to the text, both physical and emotional. For instance from *Fences*: “You just had an argument with your father, who would rather you find a trade or some kind of work instead of going to college on a sports scholarship. Let your body show how you feel.”

**Statues:** “When I say a word, form a statue of that word.” Select words from the text. As the group forms statues, push them to make their statues “twice as big, now as big as you can make it,” to add levels to the room, to increase commitment or energy amongst the students.

**Reflection:** (handbook artslit.org)

1. Based on all of the experiences you had and the statues you created with words, what do you think this text might be about?
2. How did people interpret the text differently in their statues?
3. Which situation made you feel the best?
4. Which was the most painful?
5. Which words were the easiest to physicalize? Which were the most difficult?

**Exercise: Entering Text with Line Tableaus:** This serves as a warm-up to the comprehending text exercise.

- **Structure: investigating *Fences* through African American poetry.** This lesson can be used as a preparation to reading the play. For this activity the teacher should remain out of the activity on the side of the room.

**Procedure:** The basic movement of this activity is simple. Take one line from each text, such as the following:

“There ought not never have been a time called too early.”  
“I am the darker brother. They send me to each in the kitchen.”  
“black people aren’t suppose to dream”  
“My country ‘tis of thee, late land of slavery.”

As students walk in around the room, shout out a line. Students randomly join groups around the room to create a tableau. Or perhaps they might choose to create a large tableau. Coach them to being aware of physically connecting to others in the room in creative and individual ways: creating different body shapes, using different levels.

**Museum:** Allow a couple of people to leave each time a tableau is created to view the sculpture(s). Tell them that as long as they haven’t had the chance to observe they can look. Limit it to a few people each time. Others who remain in the tableaus should “fill in” the area where others have left.

**Reflection:** (handbook artslit.org)

1. Based on all of the experiences you had and the statues you created with words, what do you think this text might be about?
2. How did people interpret the text differently in their tableaus?
3. Which situation made you feel the best?
4. Which was the most painful?
5. Which words were the easiest to physicalize? Which were the most difficult?

## Exercise: Comprehending Text, Creating Text

- **Structure: investigating *Fences* through textual analysis and interpretation.** This lesson should be used after or while reading the play. For this activity the teacher should remain out of the activity on the side of the room.

**Procedure:** Form four groups.

Assign each group a poem or passage from the play.

Each group should read their passage and choose four lines they find to be significant.

The group should then narrow the list of lines to four by voting.

Students should create a tableau for each line. Each line should be recited by the group, using repetition, chorus, echo, sound and movement to enhance the visual.

After tableaus are created, students should create a performance piece, moving fluidly from one tableau to the next.

**Reflection:** (handbook artslit.org)

1. Based on all of the experiences you had and the statues you created with lines from the text, what do you think this play might be about?
2. How did people interpret the text differently in their tableaus?
3. Why and how did you select one line over another to interpret?
4. Did adding movement help you think differently about the plot? If so, how?
5. Which lines were the easiest to physicalize? Which were the most difficult?



## **Exercise: Rehearsing and Performing Text**

- **Structure: investigating *Fences* through textual analysis and interpretation.** This lesson should be used after reading the play. It may be used after students experience the **Comprehending Text, Creating Text Exercise**. For this activity the teacher should remain out of the activity on the side of the room.

**Procedure:** Have each group take a space in the room.

After a brief countdown, each group should run through their performance piece.

Instruct students to hold their final tableau for about 10 seconds and then sit down quietly until everyone finishes their rehearsal.

Circle performance: Run through each performance piece individually so that each group presents their performance. (To save time and keep the atmosphere comfortable, students should remain in their part of the room and simply direct their focus to the performers).

Instruct students to again hold their last tableau for 10 seconds and then sit quietly.

As one group sits, the next group moves into place for performance.

Hold all applause until the end.

## **Final Reflection**

With pen/pencil and paper, students should find a quiet space in the room. Choosing their favorite line from the original poem/excerpt. They should use the line as a prompt to write their own poem.

Students should reflect in writing on the guiding and essential questions: How does art help us to see and understand ourselves and the role we play in shaping society?

## Art and Arts Literacy

**Essential Question:** How does art help us to see and understand ourselves and the role we play in shaping society?

**Standards:** D4, D5, D7, D9, D10, D11, D13, D14.

In this unit, students will discuss the rhythm and meter of excerpts from *Fences* in an effort to discover the music and poetry in Wilson’s writing. Although the Blues were a major influence in Wilson’s writing, we have deliberately avoided activities in which students create their own blues songs in order to channel their thinking toward the inherent complexity behind the influence of this art form on Wilson’s prose.

“Wilson validates the vernacular that is inherently musical. . . yet and still the trope of black musicality is often too generalized, too overused, too overdetermined to the point that it has become essentialized, limiting black people to the stereotypical claims that ‘we all got rhythm.’ The expectation that we can all sing and dance. . . At the same time, [Wilson] subverts the stereotype by exploring the pain, as well as the pleasure within the performance.”

“They sing now as survivors, recalling that past . . . Their *a capella* ode is thus time bound and yet transcendent, triumphant and yet tragic. It is a communal, dichotomous moment that contains ‘both a wail and a whelp of joy.’” (Elam)

“Musical instruments, blues songs, recurring lyrical tropes represent, embody and express the “souls of black folks.” (Elam)

### **Guiding Question:**

1. In what way do blues songs convey both pain and joy? (Be careful to consider not only words, but melody, tempo and other elements of music.)
2. What effect does the recurrence of the song, “Old Blue,” have on the play? Keep in mind that the song is revealed throughout the play in increments. Discuss the significance of this.
3. What is the effect of the diction (word choice) and syntax Wilson uses in Troy’s story about his father? Identify significant words, phrases or devices (e.g. repetition) and discuss the way in which it helps to shape your understanding of Troy as a character, as an African American man.
4. Compare and contrast the use of song and story in the play, concentrating in particular on “Old Blue,” and the story about Troy’s father. What do we learn about society from each method of expression? Is one method more effective than the other? Why or why not?
5. Troy received the song, “Old Blue,” from his father and passes it on to his children. He also, in a sense, passes on the story of his father. What impact do you believe this legacy has on his children? What impact will it have on future generations?

**Materials:**

Excerpts from *Fences*:

- “Old Blue,” Act II, Scene 5
- Troy’s story about his father in Act I, Scene 4.

**Anticipatory Set:**

Teacher might want to play a blues song for students, pointing out the meter, rhyme scheme and elements like repetition and tone. Allow time for students to discuss their impressions about the song. Most importantly, students should understand that all language has rhythm and that meter is rhythm that can be measured. It might be a good idea to have students map out the meter and rhyme scheme of the blues song they listened to.

**Small Group Discussion:**

- Allow students to respond to guiding questions in writing before breaking them up into groups in order to allow students who might be quieter to process their answers on their own.
- Break students into groups of four. Assign roles: facilitator, recorder, researcher (person who helps find textual evidence) and reporter.
- Students should discuss their responses to the guiding questions. The teacher may also choose to assign one question per group. Make sure students support their answers with textual evidence.
- Each group reports to the class, their responses to the essential question(s).

**Final Reflection (Journal):**

Think of a song, story or book that has impacted your life. It can be something passed down from a family member or something introduced to you by a friend. Write about why you believe the song or story carries emotional significance for you.

**Discussion:**

Revisit the essential question. Help students make connections between their discussion and the question.

## Art and Arts Literacy Final Activity

This final activity will allow students to reflect on the entire play. The procedures are the same as the activity on African American identity activity so students should be familiar with the procedures. Seminar questions should be assigned as homework.

### Seminar Questions:

1. Based on your understanding of the play, explain why August Wilson titled it, *Fences*. Remember that you should think about the central idea of the drama and about the title in both figurative and symbolic terms. Was this play really about a fence, or was it about something else? How do you know?
2. If you were to change the title of the play, what title would you give it and why?
3. Write down a single line from the play that you believe to be extremely important. Briefly explain why that line is essential/important/significant.
4. Write one question about the play. Your question can be about a character, scene or literary aspect. Your question must begin with the words, “why might” or “what might.”
5. Choose one idea from the play that you believe would make the world a better place if people would understand it. Explain your answer.

### Procedures:

1. Set up the room in a way that allows students to have a large-group discussion as well as provide a place for those who come to class unprepared, to finish their work.
2. Check student’s homework as they enter the room. Send students who come prepared to a place in the discussion circle. Others should take a seat in the other part of the classroom and finish their homework. They may join the circle when they are finished.
3. Review ground rules for seminar:
  - no talking over the discussion
  - no talking under the discussion (e.g. whispering) or having side conversations
  - students should raise their hands to comment
  - students should try to speak in full sentences and/or paragraphs (to practice communicating complete thoughts)
  - students should refer to each other by name
  - the teacher facilitates only when necessary; the discussion belongs to the students.
4. Begin the seminar by allowing each student in the circle to answer one of the questions. This way no one dominates and student who are more shy are forced to participate. You can open the discussion for further comments after the round

robin has finished. At this point, the teacher steps in only to remind students of ground rules, ask for textual evidence or briefly jump-start silence. In general, however, students can be trusted to fill pregnant pauses.

5. When you begin the response part of the discussion, read the essential question and step back to let the students take over. Every once in awhile it might be necessary to call on people who are not responding to draw them into the discussion.
6. Continue to answer the questions throughout the class period. You might want to debrief the process or have kids respond to the process itself on paper before they leave.

## Supplemental Texts for Art and Arts Literacy Section

### My Country 'Tis of Thee by W.E.B. DuBois

Of course you have faced the dilemma: it is announced, they all smirk and rise. If they are *ultra*, they remove their hats and look ecstatic; then they look at you. What shall you do? *Noblesse oblige*; you cannot be boorish, or ungracious; and too, after all it is your country and you *do* love its ideals if not all of its realities. Now, then, I have thought of a way out: Arise, gracefully remove your hat, and tilt your head. Then sing as follows, powerfully and with deep unction. They'll hardly note the little changes and their feelings and your conscience will thus be saved:

My country 'tis of thee,  
Late land of slavery,  
    Of thee I sing.  
Land where my father's pride  
Slept where my mother died,  
From every mountain side  
    Let freedom ring!

My native country thee  
Land of the slave set free,  
    Thy fame I love.  
I love thy rocks and rills  
And o'er thy hate which chills,  
My heart with purpose thrills,  
    To *rise* above.

Let laments swell the breeze  
And wring from all the trees  
    Sweet freedom's song.  
Let laggard tongues awake,  
Let all who hear partake,  
Let Southern silence quake,  
    The sound prolong.

Our fathers' God to thee  
Author of Liberty,  
    To thee we sing  
Soon may our land be bright,  
With Freedom's happy light  
Protect us by Thy might,  
    Great God our King.

W. E. B. Du Bois, "My Country 'Tis of Thee" from *Creative Writings by W. E. B. Du Bois* (KrausThomson Organization Limited, 1985).

Reprinted with the permission of the Estate of W. E. B. Du Bois. Source: *Creative Writings by W. E. B. Du Bois* (1985). poetryfoundation .org

## Dreams by Nikki Giovanni

in my younger years  
before i learned  
black people aren't  
suppose to dream  
i wanted to be  
a raelet  
and say "dr o wn d in my youn tears"  
or "tal kin bout tal kin bout"  
or marjorie hendricks and grind  
all up against the mic  
and scream  
"baaaaaby nightandday  
baaaaaby nightandday"  
then as i grew and matured  
i became more sensible  
and decided i would  
settle down  
and just become  
a sweet inspiration

Nikki Giovanni, "Dreams" from *Black Feeling, Black Talk, Black Judgment*. Copyright © 1968, 1970 by Nikki Giovanni. Used with the permission of HarperCollins Publishers.

Source: *The Collected Poems of Nikki Giovanni* (2003).  
poetryfoundation.org

## **I, Too by Langston Hughes**

I, too, sing America.  
I am the darker brother.  
They send me to eat in the kitchen  
When company comes,  
But I laugh,  
And eat well,  
And grow strong.

Tomorrow,  
I'll be at the table  
When company comes.  
Nobody'll dare  
Say to me,  
"Eat in the kitchen,"  
Then.

Besides,  
They'll see how beautiful I am  
And be ashamed—

I, too, am America.

Langston Hughes, "I, Too" from *Collected Poems*. Copyright © 1994 by The Estate of Langston Hughes. Reprinted with the permission of Harold Ober Associates Incorporated.

Source: *Twentieth-Century American Poetry* (2004).  
poetryfoundation.org



***Fences* by August Wilson (Excerpt from Act I: Scene I)**

ROSE: Times have changed since you was playing baseball, Troy. You just come along too early.

TROY: There ought not never have been no time called too early . . .

ROSE: They got a lot of colored baseball players now. Jackie Robinson was the first. Folks had to wait for Jackie Robinson.

TROY: I done seen a hundred niggers play baseball better than Jackie Robinson. Hell, I know some teams Jackie Robinson couldn't even make! What you talking about Jackie Robinson. Jackie Robinson wasn't nobody. I'm talking about if you could play ball better then they ought to have let you play. Don't care what color you were. Come telling me I come along too early. If you could play. . . then they ought to have let you play.

## Works Cited in the Art and Arts Literacy Section

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## Vocabulary of Important Terms

<b>Aaron, Hank</b>	Formerly baseball's all-time home-run king, Aaron played 23 years as an outfielder for the Milwaukee (later Atlanta) Braves and Milwaukee Brewers (1954–76). He holds many of baseball's most distinguished records, including runs batted in (2,297), extra base hits (1,477), total bases (6,856) and most years with 30 or more home runs (15). He is also in the top five for career hits and runs.
<b>Abolition (of slavery)</b>	the act of formally repealing an existing practice through legal means, either by making it illegal, or simply no longer allowing it to exist in any form. In the United States, The Abolition Movement refers to the project to end racial slavery and liberate black Americans. The movement gained momentum after the British Parliament outlawed the African slave trade in 1807 and incorporated people from various ethnicities and cultural backgrounds including but not limited to free blacks and liberal whites such as the Quakers. In 1863 slavery was outlawed in the United States with the formal declaration of the Emancipation Proclamation.
<b>American Civil Rights Movement</b>	(1955–1968) refers to the reform movements in the United States aimed at abolishing racial discrimination against African Americans and restoring suffrage in Southern states.
<b>Barnstorm</b>	To travel around an area appearing in exhibition sports events, especially baseball games.
<b>Batter's Box</b>	the box in which a batter stands when batting. Lies to the left or right of home plate depending on whether the batter is right or left handed.
<b>Bell, Cool Papa</b>	(May 17, 1903 – March 7, 1991) was an American center fielder in Negro league baseball, considered by many baseball observers to have been the fastest man ever to play the game. He was elected to the Baseball Hall of Fame in 1974.
<b>Brown v. Board of Education</b>	was a landmark decision of the United States Supreme Court, which declared that state laws that established separate public schools for black and white students denied black children equal educational opportunities. This victory paved the way for integration and the civil rights movement.
<b>Bunt</b>	to hit a baseball in such a way so as to make it go a short distance. Typically used to advance a team member on base.
<b>Curve Ball</b>	a ball with spin put on by the pitcher to deceive the batter as to its trajectory. The ball curves away as it reaches the batter.

- Great Depression, The** Initiated in 1929 with the crash of the stock market, the period between 1930 and approximately 1940 saw a drastic wave of unemployment sweep the country and reverberate throughout the world. Economies world over were affected. In the United States the government responded by creating several federal work and social aid programs to support the citizenry during these trying times. Franklin Delano Roosevelt's Works Progress (Project) Administration helped create thousands of jobs across the country, thereby alleviating some of the pressure of poverty and also strengthening the infrastructure of the United States with railways, highways, water-works, etc. The start of World War II helped usher in massive production in the US and around the world.
- DuBois. W.E.B.** (February 23, 1868 – August 27, 1963) William Edward Burghardt Du Bois was an African American civil rights activist, public intellectual, Pan-Africanist, sociologist, educator, historian, writer, editor, poet, and scholar. The Editor-in-Chief of *Crisis* and *Opportunity*, publications circulated by the NAACP, an organization he helped found. Du Bois wrote and published over 4,000 articles, essays and books over the course of the 95-year life. Among his most significant works are *The Philadelphia Negro* (1899), *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903), *John Brown* (1909), *Black Reconstruction* (1935), and *Black Folk, Then and Now* (1939).
- Dunbar, Paul Laurence** (June 27, 1872 -- February 9, 1906) was the first African-American poet to garner national critical acclaim. Born in Dayton, Ohio, in 1872, Dunbar penned a large body of dialect poems, standard English poems, essays, novels and short stories before he died at the age of 33. His work often addressed the difficulties encountered by members of his race and the efforts of African-Americans to achieve equality in America. He was praised both by the prominent literary critics of his time and his literary contemporaries.
- Fence, The** also known as "the wall," the fence in baseball marks the boundary of a baseball stadium. To "hit one to the fences" would be to hit a ball beyond the boundaries of the stadium and, therefore, make a homerun.
- Foster, Rube** (September 17, 1879 - December 9, 1930) covered the entire spectrum of baseball and excelled at each phase of his participation. As a raw-talent rookie pitcher soon after the turn of the century, the big 6'4" Texan is credited with 51 victories in 1902, including a win over the great "Rube" Waddell, the game in which he received his nickname. Black baseball's greatest manager, Foster was most responsible for its continued existence. He was voted into the National Baseball Hall of Fame in 1981.
- Full Count** status of a batter who has two strikes and three balls, which in baseball means that the batter is either out or on base on the next pitch.

- Gem of the Ocean** set in 1904, begins August Wilson's century-long cycle chronicling black American life. Bewildered by the collapse of the old slave regime, the first generation of black Americans recently freed from slavery are unprepared for the backlash against their newly acquired freedom by whites. Many venture north and find themselves at Aunt Ester's door, seeking solace, advice, or a place to heal. Aunt Ester makes room in the world for those cast aside. She examines and treats wounded souls. Her wisdom is ancient, timeless, connected to the source from which black Americans had been taken. *Gem of the Ocean* introduces us finally to Aunt Ester, keeper of the flame.
- Gentleman's Agreement** is an informal agreement between two or more parties. It may be written, oral, or simply understood as part of an unspoken agreement by convention or through mutually beneficial etiquette. The essence of a gentleman's agreement is that it relies upon the honor of the parties for its fulfillment, rather than being in any way enforceable. A segregationist policy lasted for 60 years that barred African-Americans from Major League Baseball. This ban was finally broken by the Brooklyn Dodgers' signing of Jackie Robinson in 1945.
- Going Down Swinging** an idiom used when a batter keeps swinging at pitches and strikes out but does not give up.
- Greenlee, Gus** (December 26, 1893—July 7, 1952) was a Negro League baseball owner and an African American businessman. Born in Marion, North Carolina, he migrated to Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania's Hill District in 1916. After working several menial jobs, he established a bootlegging business that he operated from his taxi. He later made his reputation as a numbers runner and racketeer, as well as the owner of the Crawford Grill nightclub and the Negro League baseball team the Pittsburgh Crawfords. He was also known as a philanthropist who helped fellow blacks in his community with scholarships for schooling and with grants to buy homes.
- Gibson, Josh** (December 21, 1911 - January 20, 1947) was an American catcher in baseball's Negro Leagues. He played for the Homestead Grays from 1930 to 1931, moved to the Pittsburgh Crawfords from 1932 to 1936, and returned to the Grays from 1937 to 1939 and 1942 to 1946. In 1933 he hit .467 with 55 home runs in 137 games against all levels of competition. His lifetime batting average is said to be higher than .350, with other sources putting it as high as .384, the best in Negro League history. He reportedly hit "almost 800" homers in his 17-year career against Negro League and independent baseball. His lifetime batting average, according to the Hall of Fame's official data, was .359. It was reported that he won nine home-run titles and four batting championships playing for the Crawfords and the Homestead Grays. In two seasons in the late 1930s, it was written that not only did he hit higher than .400, but his slugging percentage was above 1.000. *The Sporting News* of June 3, 1967 credits Gibson with a home run in a Negro League game at Yankee Stadium that struck two feet from the top of the wall circling the center field bleachers, about 580 feet from home plate. Although it has never been conclusively proven, Chicago American Giants infielder Jack Marshall said Gibson slugged one over the third deck next to the left field bullpen in

1934 for the only fair ball hit out of Yankee Stadium. There is no published season-by-season breakdown of Gibson's home run totals in all the games he played in various leagues and exhibitions.

**Industrial Revolution**

was a period in the late 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries when major changes in agriculture, manufacturing, and transportation had a profound effect on the socioeconomic and cultural conditions in North America and Europe. The Industrial Revolution instigated a shift from manual-labor-based economies towards machine-based manufacturing. Trade expansion was enabled by the introduction of canals, improved roads and railways.

**Jim Crow**

Segregation, or “Jim Crow law” the enforced, at one time legal, separation of the races in the United States based on racial prejudice and assumptions of racial superiority that was contested largely in the public realm as it pertained to people of color accessing social services such as public transportation, public drinking fountains and bathrooms, schools, theaters and stores. Segregation also influenced miscegenation (interracial or interethnic marriage or dating) hiring practices, legal representation, voting practices, medical care and housing. Citizens, business owners, state and federal officials, terrorist mob groups and the KKK enforced segregation. The Civil Rights Movement spurred the US Supreme Court to declare segregation officially unconstitutional in 1954. Its retraction throughout the country proved both slow and very violent.

**King Jr., Dr. Martin Luther**

(January 15, 1929 – April 4, 1968) was a leader in the American civil rights movement. A Baptist minister, King became a civil rights activist early in his career. He led the Montgomery Bus Boycott (1955–6) and helped found the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (1957), serving as its first president. His efforts led to the 1963 March on Washington, where King delivered his “I Have a Dream” speech. There, he raised public consciousness of the civil rights movement and established himself as one of the greatest orators in U.S. history. In 1964, King became the youngest person to receive the Nobel Peace Prize for his work to end segregation and racial discrimination through civil disobedience and other non-violent means. By the time of his death in 1968, he had refocused his efforts on ending poverty and opposing the Vietnam War, both from a religious perspective. King was assassinated on April 4, 1968, in Memphis, Tennessee. He was posthumously awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom in 1977 and Congressional Gold Medal in 2004; Martin Luther King, Jr. Day was established as a national holiday in the United States in 1986.

<b>King Hedley II</b>	is the ninth play in August Wilson’s ten-play 20 <sup>th</sup> Century Cycle chronicling the lives of African Americans decade by decade. Set in the 1980s, it is the sequel to <i>Seven Guitars</i> , a play in which young Ruby chose Hedley and she named their child King. We meet King the second as a grown man, fighting to survive a life that seems never to look bright. King carries the weight of the world on his shoulders. At times, he even seems strapped with a curse. Yet King imagines that he is crowned instead, adorned with halo whose meaning he does not yet know. <i>King Hedley II</i> is a riveting play about the past revisiting a man struggling to free himself from the grip of his family’s legacy while desperate to hold on to his loved ones.
<b>Ku Klux Klansman</b>	a member of the white supremacist, segregationist, anti-Semitic fraternal terrorist organization originated in the United States created at the end of the Civil War. Known particularly for its acts of hate against blacks in the American South that includes lynching (murder), cross-burning, violence against children and bombings. The KKK is particularly outspoken about “racial purity” and the “threat of miscegenation.” In recent years the organization has also expressed anti-homosexual views as well.
<b>Little Rock, Arkansas</b>	the city in which nine black school children were besieged by racial hatred for trying to enter the segregated public high school in 1957. The group became known as the Little Rock Nine. The ensuing Little Rock Crisis, in which the students were initially prevented from entering the racially segregated school by Arkansas Governor Orval Faubus, and then attended after the intervention of President Eisenhower, is considered to be one of the most important events in the American Civil Rights Movement.
<b>Montgomery, Alabama</b>	the first capital of the Confederate States of America, Montgomery became a hotspot for Civil Rights activity in the 1950s and 1960s. Rev. Dr. Martin L. King Jr. gained national attention for civil rights issues during his tenure (1954 to 1960) as pastor of the Dexter Avenue Baptist Church, two blocks from the State Capitol Building. A civil rights memorial has been erected near the still-active church. On December 1, 1955 Rosa Parks became a civil rights heroine in the city by refusing to give up her bus seat to a white man. The reaction to this arrest led to the 382-day Montgomery Bus Boycott, which forced the city to desegregate its transit system on December 21, 1956. In 1965, Dr. King's nationally publicized march for justice was conducted from Selma to Montgomery.
<b>Montgomery Bus Boycott</b>	was a political and social protest campaign started in 1955 in Montgomery, Alabama, intended to oppose the city's policy of racial segregation on its public transit system. The ensuing struggle lasted from December 1, 1955, to December 20, 1956, and led to a United States Supreme Court decision that declared the Alabama and Montgomery laws requiring segregated buses unconstitutional.

- Negro League** was an American professional baseball league comprising predominantly African-American teams. The term may be used broadly to include professional black teams outside the leagues and it may be used narrowly for the seven relatively successful leagues beginning 1920 that are sometimes termed "Negro Major Leagues." The first professional team, established in 1885, achieved great and lasting success as the Cuban Giants, while the first league, the National Colored Base Ball League, failed in 1887 after only two weeks due to low attendance. The Negro American League of 1951 is considered the last major league season.
- Paige, Satchel** (July 7, 1906–June 8, 1982) was an American baseball player whose pitching in the Negro Leagues and in Major League Baseball made him a legend of American baseball. Paige is often credited with having recorded more than 300 career shutouts. His career win total is estimated at well over 1500 games, a figure which includes virtually countless appearances in exhibition games against all levels of competition both in the United States and south of the border.
- Parks, Rosa** (February 4, 1913 – October 24, 2005) was an African American civil rights activist whom the U.S. Congress later called "Mother of the Modern-Day Civil Rights Movement". On December 1, 1955 in Montgomery, Alabama, Parks refused to obey the bus driver's order that she give up her seat to make room for a white passenger. Parks' civil disobedience sparked the Montgomery Bus Boycott. This movement turned Parks into an international icon of resistance to racial segregation and launched boycott leader Martin Luther King, Jr. to national prominence in the civil rights movement. Parks eventually received honors ranging from the 1979 Spingarn Medal to a posthumous statue in the United States Capitol's National Statuary Hall. At the time of her action, Parks was secretary of the Montgomery chapter of the NAACP and had recently attended the Highlander Folk School, a Tennessee center for workers' rights and racial equality. Although widely honored in later years for her action, she also suffered for it, losing her job as a seamstress in a local department store.
- Radio Golf** is the last play in August Wilson's 20th Century Cycle chronicling the African American experience decade by decade. It is the story of a man whose path through life has been decreed by his father. Following in the footsteps of a well-respected but feared man, Harmond Wilks struggles to evade his shadow. He does what is expected of him in order to help his community, but it is ultimately his own journey and rejection of the grandeur which awaits him that brings him back to the people of Pittsburgh's Hill District.



**Robinson, Jackie** (January 31, 1919 – October 24, 1972) Jack Roosevelt "Jackie" Robinson became the first African-American major league baseball player of the modern era in 1947. While not the first African American professional baseball player in United States history, his Major League debut with the Brooklyn Dodgers ended approximately eighty years of baseball segregation, also known as the baseball color line, or color barrier. In the United States at this time, many white people believed that blacks and whites should be segregated or kept apart in many phases of life, including sports and daily life. The Baseball Hall of Fame inducted Robinson in 1962 and he was a member of six World Series teams. In addition to his accomplishments on the field, Jackie Robinson was also a forerunner of the Civil Rights Movement. In the 1960s, he was a key figure in the establishment and growth of the Freedom National Bank, an African-American owned and controlled entity based in Harlem, New York. He also wrote a syndicated newspaper column for a number of years, in which he was an outspoken supporter of Martin Luther King Jr. and Malcolm X. In recognition of his accomplishments, Robinson was posthumously awarded a Congressional Gold Medal and the Presidential Medal of Freedom. On April 15, 1997, the 50 year anniversary of his debut, Major League Baseball retired the jersey number 42, the number he wore, across all MLB teams in recognition of his accomplishments both on and off the field in a ceremony at Shea Stadium.

### **Segregation**

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**Southern  
Manifesto**

was a document written in February-March 1956 by legislators in the United States Congress opposed to racial integration in public places. The manifesto was signed by 101 politicians from Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, and Virginia. The document was largely drawn up to counter the landmark Supreme Court 1954 ruling *Brown v. Board of Education*, which integrated public schools. The initial version was written by Strom Thurmond and the final version mainly by Richard Russell. The manifesto was signed by 19 Senators and 81 members of the House of Representatives, including the entire congressional delegations of the states of Alabama, Arkansas, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, South Carolina and Virginia. School segregation laws were some of the most enduring and best-known of the Jim Crow laws that characterized the American South and several northern states at the time. The Southern Manifesto accused the Supreme Court of "clear abuse of judicial power." It further promised to use "all lawful means to bring about a reversal of this decision which is contrary to the Constitution and to prevent the use of force in its implementation."

**Strike Out**

a baseball term. A batter makes an out by either swinging and missing the pitch or not hitting good pitches.

**Uncle Remus**

is a fictional character, the title character and fictional narrator of a collection of African American a collection folktales including animal stories, songs, and oral folklore, collected from adapted and compiled by a white writer, Joel Chandler Harris, who published them in book form in 1881. A journalist in post-Reconstruction Atlanta, Georgia's West End, Harris produced seven Uncle Remus books. The genre of stories follows the trickster tales like those found in West Africa, however resituated by a white writer, the tales lose much of their cultural authenticity. At the time of Harris' publication, his work was praised for its ability to capture "plantation Negro dialect." The term "uncle" was a patronizing, familiar and often racist title reserved by whites for elderly black men in the South, which is considered by many to be pejorative and offensive.

**Washington,  
Booker T.**

(April 5, 1856 – November 14, 1915) was an influential educator, political leader and author working at the turn of the century. He was the founding principal of the Tuskegee Institute. He is perhaps most famous for his autobiography *Up From Slavery* and his 1895 address in Atlanta wherein he suggested that the best way for African Americans to participate within US society was to redirect efforts to end segregation in order to focus on education and developing a skilled labor force. His debates over this with **W.E.B. DuBois**, who considered Washington an apologist, are well-known.

**Wilson, August**

(April 27, 1945—October 2, 2005) was a Pulitzer Prize-winning African American playwright. Called "one of the most important voices in the American theater today" by Mervyn Rothstein in the *New York Times*, August Wilson's authentic sounding characters have brought a new understanding of the black experience to audiences around the country. For example, *Fences*, tells the story of a black baseball player who broke national records by leaps and bounds but was prevented from playing outside of the Negro Leagues. *Fences* opened on Broadway in the spring of 1987 to enormous critical acclaim and earned Wilson his first Pulitzer Prize. Wilson's work gives audiences the opportunity to go back and reexamine American history through characters that are epic, poignant and defiantly struggling against the institutionalized legacy of racism in this country.