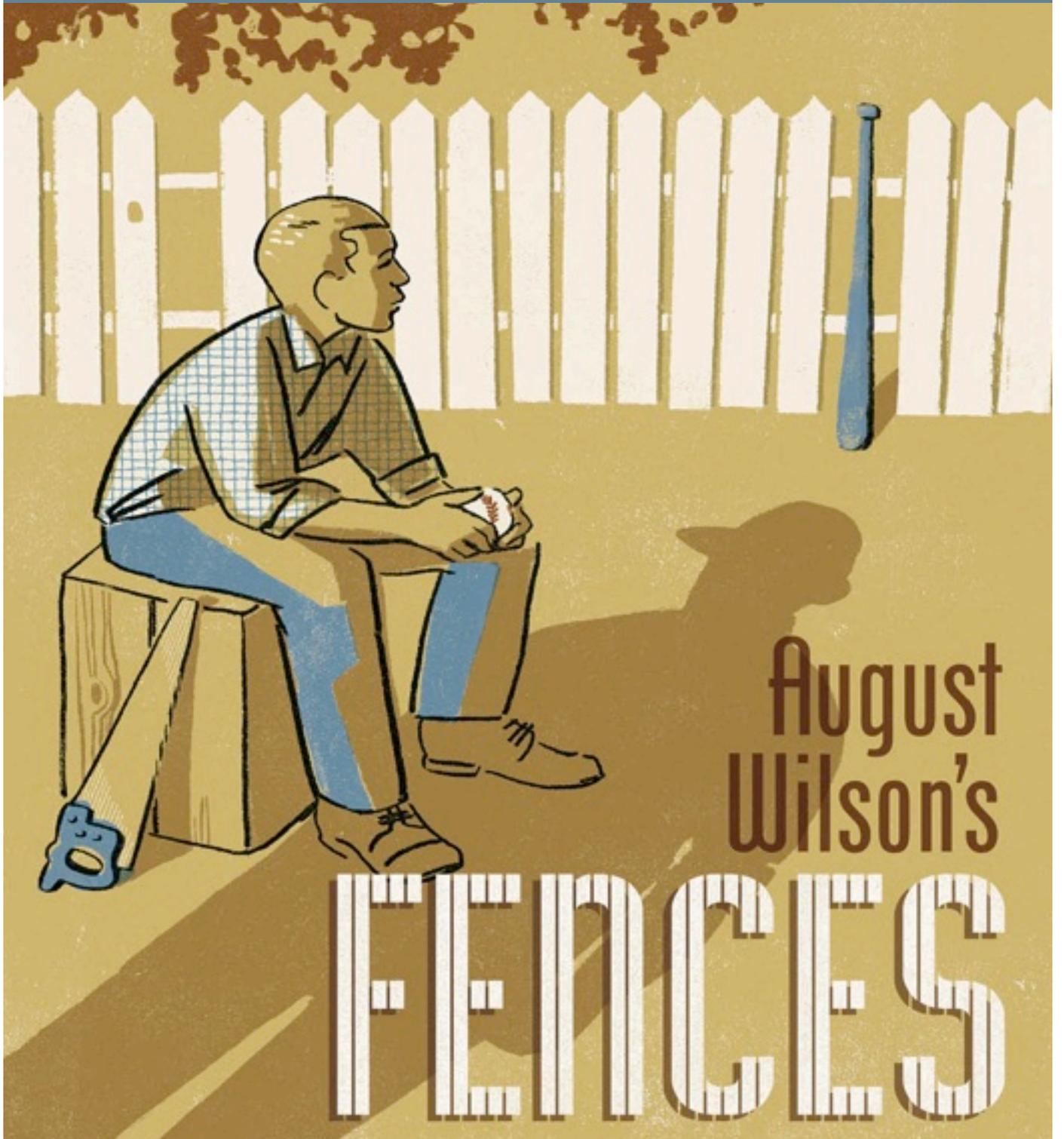


PLAY GUIDE



2015



2016



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*Fences* Play Guide written and designed by Katherine Monberg, ATC Literary Manager, with assistance from Luke Young, Learning & Education Manager, and Bryanna Patrick, Learning & Education Associate.

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## ABOUT ATC

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Arizona Theatre Company is a professional, not-for-profit theatre company. This means that all of our artists, administrators and production staff are paid professionals, and the income we receive from ticket sales and contributions goes right back into our budget to create our work, rather than to any particular person as a profit.

Each season, ATC employs hundreds of actors, directors and designers from all over the country to create the work you see on stage. In addition, ATC currently employs approximately 50 staff members in our production shops and administrative offices in Tucson and Phoenix during our season. Among these people are carpenters, painters, marketing professionals, fundraisers, stage directors, sound and light board operators, tailors, costume designers, box office agents, stage crew - the list is endless - representing an amazing range of talents and skills.

We are also supported by a Board of Trustees, a group of business and community leaders who volunteer their time and expertise to assist the theatre in financial and legal matters, advise in marketing and fundraising, and help represent the theatre in our community.

Roughly 150,000 people attend our shows every year, and several thousand of those people support us with charitable contributions in addition to purchasing their tickets. Businesses large and small, private foundations and the city and state governments also support our work financially.

All of this is in support of our vision and mission:

**The mission of Arizona Theatre Company is to inspire, engage and entertain - one moment, one production and one audience at a time.**

Our mission is to create professional theatre that continually strives to reach new levels of artistic excellence that resonates locally, in the state of Arizona and throughout the nation. In order to fulfill our mission, the theatre produces a broad repertoire ranging from classics to new works, engages artists of the highest caliber, and is committed to assuring access to the broadest spectrum of citizens.



**The Temple of Music and Art**, the home of ATC shows in downtown Tucson.



**The Herberger Theater Center**, ATC's performance venue in downtown Phoenix.



## INTRODUCTION TO THE PLAY

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**David Alan Anderson** in ATC's production of *Fences*.

### August Wilson's *Fences*

Directed by Lou Bellamy

One of the most loved plays of our time, *Fences* tells the gripping story of African-American garbage collector Troy Maxson, a star baseball player whose career was blunted by the racism prevalent in pre-Jackie Robinson America. Muscular and lyrical, this beloved August Wilson blockbuster shows what can happen when a strong man is robbed of his dreams. *Fences* is a searing, stunning play, as classically American as baseball itself.

## MEET THE PLAYWRIGHT

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Playwright **August Wilson**.

August Wilson (Playwright, April 27, 1945-October 2, 2005) authored *Gem of the Ocean*, *Joe Turner's Come and Gone*, *Ma Rainey's Black Bottom*, *The Piano Lesson*, *Seven Guitars*, *Fences*, *Two Trains Running*, *Jitney*, *King Hedley II*, and *Radio Golf*. These works explore the heritage and experience of the descendants of Africans in North America, decade-by-decade, over the course of the twentieth century. His plays have been produced at regional theaters across the country and all over the world, as well as on Broadway. In 2003, Mr. Wilson made his professional stage debut in his one-man show, *How I Learned What I Learned*. Mr. Wilson's works garnered many awards including

the Pulitzer Prize for *Fences* (1987); and for *The Piano Lesson* (1990); a Tony Award for *Fences*; Great Britain's Olivier Award for *Jitney*; as well as seven New York Drama Critics Circle Awards for *Ma Rainey's Black Bottom*, *Fences*, *Joe Turner's Come and Gone*, *The Piano Lesson*, *Two Trains Running*, *Seven Guitars*, and *Jitney*. Additionally, the cast recording of *Ma Rainey's Black Bottom* won a 1985 Grammy Award, and Mr. Wilson received a 1995 Emmy Award nomination for



his screenplay adaptation of *The Piano Lesson*. Mr. Wilson's early works included the one-act plays *The Janitor*, *Recycle*, *The Coldest Day of the Year*, *Malcolm X*, *The Homecoming*, and the musical satire *Black Bart and the Sacred Hills*. Mr. Wilson received many fellowships and awards, including the Rockefeller and Guggenheim Fellowships in Playwriting, the Whiting Writers Award, 2003 Heinz Award, was awarded a 1999 National Humanities Medal by the President of the United States, and received numerous honorary degrees from colleges and universities, as well as the only high school diploma ever issued by the Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh. He was an alumnus of New Dramatists, a member of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, a 1995 inductee into the American Academy of Arts and Letters, and on October 16, 2005, Broadway renamed the theater located at 245 West 52nd Street - The August Wilson Theatre. Additionally, Mr. Wilson was posthumously inducted into the Theater Hall of Fame in 2007. Mr. Wilson was born and raised in the Hill District of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania and lived in Seattle, Washington at the time of his death. He is immediately survived by his two daughters, Sakina Ansari and Azula Carmen Wilson, and his wife, costume designer Constanza Romero.

## MEET THE CHARACTERS

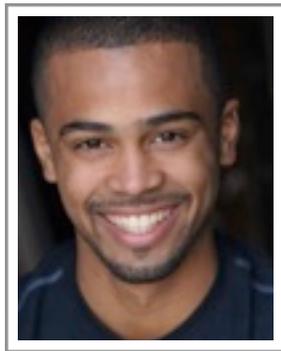
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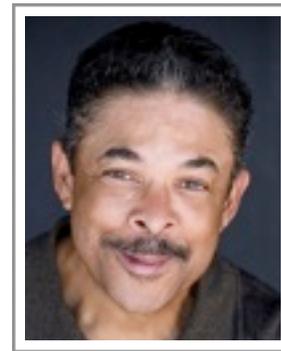
Actor **David Alan Anderson**, who plays Troy in ATC's production of *Fences*.



Actor **Kim Staunton**, who plays Rose in ATC's production of *Fences*.



Actor **Edgar Sanchez**, who plays Cory in ATC's production of *Fences*.



Actor **Terry Bellamy**, who plays Gabriel in ATC's production of *Fences*.



Actor **Marcus Naylor**, who plays Jim Bono in ATC's production of *Fences*.



Actor **James T. Alfred**, who plays Lyons in ATC's production of *Fences*.



Actor **Simeeyah Grace Baker**, who plays Raynell in ATC's production of *Fences*.



**Troy Maxson:** Former star of Negro League Baseball, now a garbage collector, a storyteller and complicated man.

**Rose Maxson:** Troy's wife, a loving mother and supportive presence; a gentle spirit, but fiercely protective of her family.

**Cory Maxson:** The son of Troy and Rose, a natural athlete who aspires to win a college football scholarship, to enable him a path to success that was denied to his own father.

**Gabriel Maxson:** Troy's brother, who lives with severe head trauma suffered in World War II, and vehemently believes himself to be the archangel Gabriel.

**Jim Bono:** A good friend of Troy's, the two met in prison and have remained close through Troy's days of baseball stardom, and now work together as garbage collectors.

**Lyons Maxson:** Troy's charming, eldest son from a previous relationship, a musician whose passion somewhat interrupts his steady employment; Lyons lives with his girlfriend near Troy and Rose.

**Raynell Maxson:** Troy's daughter and youngest child from another relationship.

## THE AMERICAN CENTURY CYCLE

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Playwright **August Wilson**, author of the American Century Cycle.

**“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.

August Wilson’s American Century Cycle is a collection of ten plays that chronicle a collective century of the Black American experience, with each of the ten plays set in a different decade spanning the 20th century. Nine of the ten plays are set in the Hill District of Pittsburgh, one of many connection points woven through the multiple narratives.

Though the American Century Cycle is not connected into a single linear story, several characters or their descendants appear more than once throughout the ten scripts; the character with the most appearances is Aunt Ester, a “washer of souls,” who appears in various stages of life and reference in *Gem of the Ocean*, *Two Trains Running*, *King Hedley II*, and *Radio Golf*.



**David Alan Anderson** in ATC's production of *Fences*.

As a playwright, August Wilson was dedicated to cultivating social consciousness through the power of theatre, and the use of a medium through which a community could truly connect to invite an audience to bear witness to the state of the world around them, and their own place in the historical and contemporary social fabric.

In an interview with *The Paris Review*, Wilson stated that “my plays offer (white Americans) 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, white people 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.”

*Gem of the Ocean*, set in the 1900s, premiered in 2003 at the Goodman Theatre in Chicago before transferring to Broadway the following year. The play depicts 285-year-old Aunt Ester, a healer and a keeper of tradition, as she cleanses the souls of those who pass through her kitchen. She leads one new arrival, Citizen Barlow, aboard the legendary slave ship known as the Gem of the Ocean, to embark on a journey of spiritual redemption to the mythical City of Bones.

*Joe Turner's Come and Gone*, set in the 1910s, premiered in 1986 at Yale Repertory Theatre before opening at Broadway's Ethel Barrymore Theatre in 1988. The play depicts the lives of boardinghouse owner Seth Holly and his wife Bertha, as they meet and share living space with freed former slaves who have moved North after the Civil War, illuminating the ongoing racism and discrimination in the post-war United States.



**Jevetta Steele** in ATC's production of *Ma Rainey's Black Bottom*, 2010.

*Ma Rainey's Black Bottom*, set in the 1920s, premiered at Yale Repertory Theatre in 1984 before opening on Broadway later that year. The only play of the American Century Cycle set in Chicago, it describes the rising tension between members of blues singer Ma Rainey's band, and the desperation entwined in limited and thwarted opportunities.

*The Piano Lesson*, set in the 1930s in the aftermath of the Great Depression, premiered at Yale Repertory Theatre in 1987, and later opened on Broadway in 1990. Winner of the 1990 Pulitzer Prize for Drama, *The Piano Lesson* was inspired by a painting of the same name by Romare Bearden. The play depicts the lives of Doaker Charles and his household, interwoven with their various perspectives on the meaning and fate of the family heirloom piano.



**David Downing** in ATC's production of *Seven Guitars*, 1997.



**Kim Staunton** and **David Alan Anderson** in ATC's production of *Fences*.



**Bus Howard**, **Chuck Patterson**, and **Adolphus Ward** in ATC's production of *Jitney*, 2006.

*Seven Guitars*, set in the 1940s, premiered at Chicago's Goodman Theatre in 1995 before moving on to Broadway in 1996. *Seven Guitars* details the journey of blues singer Floyd "Schoolboy" Barton as he seeks to define his own humanity, self-acceptance, and self-understanding and to right past wrongs after signing a record deal.

*Fences*, set in the 1950s, premiered at Yale Repertory Theatre in 1985 before opening at Broadway's 46th Street Theatre in 1987. Winner of the 1987 Pulitzer Prize for Drama and Tony Award for Best Play, *Fences* focuses on 53-year-old Troy as he struggles to provide for his family as a garbage collector, years after being forced to abandon his dreams of becoming a professional baseball player due to the persisting color barrier in Major League Baseball.

*Two Trains Running*, set in the 1960s, premiered at Yale Repertory Theatre in 1990, and transferred to Broadway in 1992. The play examines the social and psychological manifestations of urban blacks as their attitudes toward race evolve in mid-20th century America.

*Jitney*, set in the 1970s, premiered in 1982 at the Allegheny Repertory Theatre in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. The play details the lives of the unofficial, unlicensed taxi drivers known as jitneys, as they hustle to make a living providing transportation to the Pittsburgh Hill District, where regular cabs will not venture.

*King Hedley II*, set in the 1980s, premiered at the Pittsburgh Public Theatre in 1991 and opened on Broadway in 2001. The play tells the story of ex-con King Hedley as he attempts to rebuild his life in Pittsburgh by starting a family and selling refrigerators, with aspirations to eventually buy a video store. Stories of several characters from Wilson's earlier play, *Seven Guitars*, also weave throughout the narrative.



*Radio Golf*, set in the 1990s, is the final play in The American Century Cycle in both narrative chronology and authorship, which premiered in 2005 at Yale Repertory Theatre; August Wilson passed away between the play's premiere and its opening at Broadway's Court Theatre in 2007. The play details the story of Ivy League graduate Harmond Wilkes as he seeks to redevelop Pittsburgh's Hill District after inheriting his father's real estate agency, whose aspirations are interrupted by continuing forces of racism and privilege.

After August Wilson's death from liver cancer in 2005, playwright Tony Kushner paid tribute in Wilson's *New York Times* obituary to the "giant figure in American theater. Heroic is not a word one uses often without embarrassment to describe a writer or playwright, but the diligence and ferocity of effort behind the creation of his body of work is really an epic story... He was reclaiming ground for the theater that most people thought had been abandoned."

## HISTORICAL CONTEXT: AMERICA IN 1957

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August Wilson's *Fences* is set in the Pittsburgh Hill District of 1957, an important year in black 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.



Martin Luther King, Jr., delivering a speech in 1967.

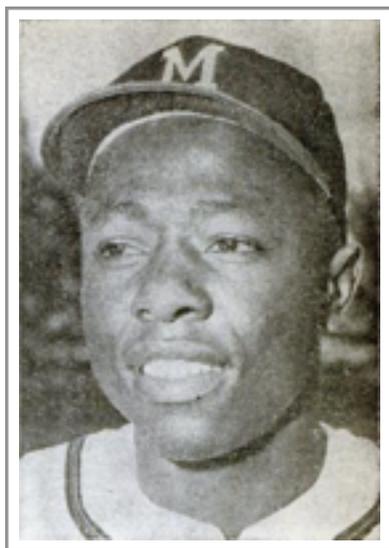
**"Times have changed, Troy. You just come along too early."**

-Bono, *Fences*

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. 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 the voting rights of all African Americans, which had been previously limited to approximately 20%.



**The Little Rock Nine** being escorted into Little Rock Central High School, 1957.



**Hank Aaron** with the Braves, 1960.

Also in 1957, nine African American students demanded desegregation by enrolling at Little Rock's Central High School, as ordered (but not enforced) three years earlier by the outcome of *Brown v. Board of Education*, a Supreme Court decision which overturned the "separate but equal" doctrine that still permeated much of the American south as a major ideological component of existing Jim Crow laws.

Meanwhile, while a mob of more than 1,000 white protestors objected the integration of Little Rock's Central High School, 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 *Fences*, Troy Maxson, and his family. However, as a writer and chronicler of the African-American experience, Wilson posited that it was not the events of history that needed to be examined, but rather the culture itself which reacts to cultural events as they fold. To encompass the complexity and the impact of a moment in time, Wilson the blues of the 1950s as the greatest source of his 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."

## NEGRO LEAGUE BASEBALL

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**"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, *Fences*

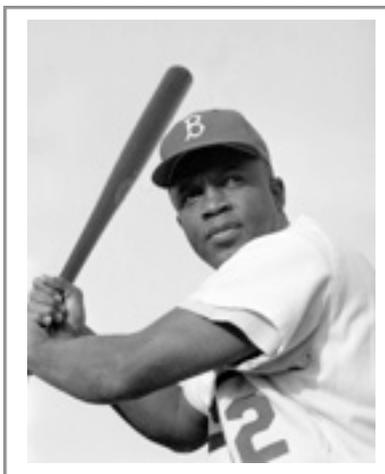
The Negro leagues were a collection of professional baseball leagues comprised of predominantly black teams, created in response to a "gentlemen's agreement" from 1884 which barred African Americans from competing in America's major and minor baseball leagues.



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 U.S. Over the next four decades, numerous other segregated major leagues would be formed to varying degrees of success, including a second Negro National League, the Eastern Colored League and the Negro American League.



**Gus Greenlee**, famous racketeer and owner of the Pittsburgh Crawfords.



**Jackie Robinson**, 1954.

The Great Depression and an absence of sustained leadership threatened the sustainability of Negro League baseball, which was largely revived in Pittsburgh in the 1930s, as 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, and which grew to one of the strongest lineups in baseball history in the early 1930s, including the legendary Satchel Paige and Josh Gibson (1932-36), and winning the Negro League Championship in 1935. Pittsburgh's Homestead Grays also dominated the Eastern baseball scene, led by future Hall of Famers Josh Gibson (1930-31), "Cool" Pap Bell, Judy Johnson, Buck Leonard, "Smokey" Joe Williams, and Cuban great Martin Dihigo. Black American baseball reached its zenith of popularity in the 1930s and 1940s and 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 U.S. before racial integration, and which trained players such 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.



## PITTSBURGH'S HILL DISTRICT AND URBAN RENEWAL

**“You got more stories than the devil got sinners.”**

-Bono, *Fences*

August Wilson was born in the Hill District of Pittsburgh in 1945, a vibrant cultural center of black American life, art, community and music that weaves through his plays as a characteristic landscape, an authentic and historical cross-section of black American culture and tradition, and occasionally as a literal crossroads of time, place, and identity.

Following the Civil War, many African Americans in the agricultural south found themselves continuously victimized by white supremacy in the sharecropping system, which left many indebted to white landlords as the result of ongoing political and economic racial discrimination combined with the unpredictable nature of agricultural enterprise. Though designated as free persons by federal decree, the prevalence of Jim Crow laws into the 20th century, designed to limit and to enforce segregation in the opportunities available to black Americans, forced many workers to seek better opportunities in the industrial centers of the north, further urged by promises from northern business recruiters who sought an expansive workforce of laborers. New arrivals flooded the American northeast between 1880 and 1910, and by 1904, the Hill District was representative of a vibrant melting pot of some 55,000 people of diverse ethnicities and histories.

For black Americans who were still frequent targets of racism in nearby downtown Pittsburgh, the Hill District grew into a thriving hub of black culture as the home of the Crawfords and Grays baseball teams of the Negro National League, the site of numerous interracial bars and clubs from which jazz and the blues wafted into the world, and the birthplace of the Pittsburgh Courier, once the largest black newspaper in the nation.

However, by the 1940s, a deteriorating infrastructure threatened the vibrant community as age and political discrimination began to take a toll on the physical structures of the Hill District. The lower Hill redevelopment plan was approved by the federal government in 1955, slating the demolition of 95 acres and 1,300 properties and displacing more than 8,000 residents, of which approximately 80% were black families. Between 1950 and 1980, an estimated total of 1600 black neighborhoods were destroyed by urban renewal and largely replaced with public housing at an immense social cost, widely dispersing and displacing the inhabitants of the previously rich and thriving African American community.



**The Hill District** is the green area visible above downtown Pittsburgh in this aerial photograph.



The struggling Hill District was then further disrupted and disheartened by violence following the 1968 assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., which sparked a week of rage resulting in more than 500 fires, immense property damage, 926 arrests and one death. The accelerating decline spurred the introduction of crime and drugs into the Hill as the population continued to wane. Further exacerbated by the decline of the steel industry in the 1970s and 1980s, it was estimated that only 5, 419 residents remained by the 1990s.

## THEMES IN THE PLAY

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**“Some people build fences to keep people out – and other people build fences to keep people in.”**

-Bono, *Fences*

### Family

*Fences* explores the responsibilities of family life and the inherent frustrations, choices, and consequences, and the lasting ripples of families disrupted or forsaken.



David Alan Anderson and Kim Staunton in ATC's production of *Fences*.

### Opportunity and Limitations

Troy views his baseball career and his dream deferred as a consequence of the rampant discrimination in American life and baseball. How then does the passage of time, the progress of the world, and the choices he made affect his destiny?

### Death

Troy's name is a metaphor for the defensive wall erected by the Athenians during the Trojan War. A frequent adversary throughout his life, Troy names death as “a fast ball on the outside corner.”

### Separation

Fence (noun): a barrier intended to prevent escape or intrusion or to mark a boundary (*Merriam-Webster*). Troy's stories also tell us about other kinds of separation including emotional distance between people, the interruption of families, and the disruptive power of time.

### Race and Racism

The ripples of racism – past, present, and projected – weave throughout the circumstances that have contributed to Troy's life and which continue to shape his future.



## THOUGHTS FROM AUGUST WILSON

**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



David Alan Anderson and Kim Staunton in ATC's production of *Fences*.

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 bakers' ovens, a thousand churches and hospitals and funeral parlors and moneylenders. 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.

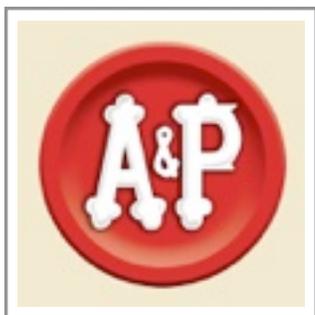
The descendants of African slaves were offered no such welcome or participation. They came from places called the Carolinas and the Virginias, Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi, and Tennessee. They came strong, eager, searching. The city rejected them, and they fled and settled along the riverbanks and under 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 of 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.

— August Wilson, introduction to *Fences*

## GLOSSARY

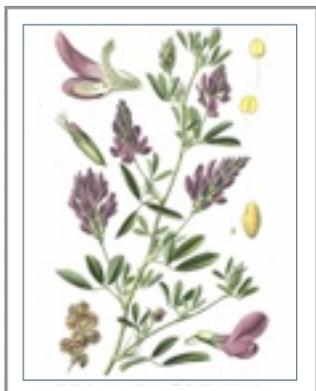


Logo of The Great Atlantic and Pacific Tea Company, better known as **the A&P**.

**A day late and a dollar short:** An idiom meaning that an action was undertaken too late and too feebly to be of any use.

**A&P:** The Great Atlantic & Pacific Tea Company, a chain of grocery stores across America and Canada that was in business for 156 until 2015, and was the largest food and grocery retailer in the U.S. from 1915 until 1975.

**Alfalfa:** A leguminous plant with clover-like leaves and bluish flowers, native to southwestern Asia.



Painting of an **alfalfa** plant.

**Babe Ruth:** American professional baseball player who played Major League Baseball for 22 seasons from 1914 to 1935. He established numerous batting records and earned his fame as an outfielder for the New York Yankees. Regarded as one of the greatest American sports heroes of all time, he was one of the first five players inducted into the National Baseball Hall of Fame in 1936.

**Bankbook:** A book held by a depositor in which deposits and withdrawals are recorded.

**Banty rooster:** A small, aggressive rooster; the phrase is often used in reference to a small, loud person.

**Battle of Armageddon:** Christian reference to the gathering of opposing armies that will signify the end of the world, as Jesus returns to earth to defeat the Antichrist, the False Prophet, and Satan (the Devil).

**Bible:** A collection of texts sacred to Judaism and Christianity, considered to be a product of divine inspiration or an authoritative record of the relationship between God and humans.

**Blackjack:** The most widely-played casino banking game in the world in which players compete against the dealer to arrive closest to a sum of 21, without exceeding that number.

**Bound over:** A circumstance in which a person accused of a crime is legally obligated to appear before a grand jury or in a particular court.



**Babe Ruth** in his Yankees uniform, 1920.

**Brag:** To boast.



Roberto Clemente, 1950.

**Braves:** The Atlanta Braves are an American professional baseball franchise based in Atlanta since 1966, after originating and playing for several decades in Boston and then Milwaukee.

**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.

**Clemente:** Roberto Clemente was a Puerto Rican professional baseball player who played 18 seasons in American Major League Baseball 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 after his untimely death in an aviation accident in 1972 while on his way to deliver aid to earthquake victims in Nicaragua.



A bundle of collard greens.

**Collard greens:** The leaves of a cabbage variety that does not develop a heart, eaten as a vegetable.

**Commence:** To start or begin.

**Commissioner:** A person commissioned or invested with the authority to act officially, as a representative in charge of a department, district, or association.

**Confront:** To meet someone face-to-face with hostile or argumentative intent.

**Courier:** The Pittsburgh Courier was an African-American newspaper published in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, from 1907 until 1966. By the 1930s, the Courier was one of the most significant black newspapers in the United States.



Dominoes.

**Dominoes:** Any of 28 small oblong pieces marked with 0-6 dots (pips) in each half and used in playing games.

**Eyeing:** Watching closely or with interest.

**Frigidaire:** Used in the play as a reference to a refrigerator, Frigidaire is the American consumer and commercial appliances brand subsidiary of European parent company Electrolux.



**Hank Aaron**, 2013.

**Gabriel:** In the Abrahamic religions, an angel who typically serves as a messenger from God to certain people, sometimes referred to as an archangel or an angel of high rank.

**Goodyears:** Tires, made by the Goodyear Tire and Rubber Company.

**Hank Aaron:** Retired American Major League Baseball (MLB) right fielder, who played 21 seasons for the Milwaukee/Atlanta Braves and two season for the Milwaukee Brewers from 1954 to 1976. 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 fifteen times.



The goddess Hel and the hellhound Garmr by Johannes Gehrts, 1889.

**Hassle:** An irritating inconvenience, or to harass or pester.

**Hellhounds:** Supernatural dogs in folklore which occur in mythologies around the world, assigned to guard entrances to the world of the dead.

**Irrespective:** Regardless of, or not taking something into account.

**Jackie Robinson:** American Major League Baseball second baseman who became the first African American to play in the major leagues in the modern era when the Brooklyn Dodgers started him at first base on April 15, 1947.



**Jackie Robinson** in uniform for the Kansas City Monarchs, 1944.

**Japs:** Often used as a derogatory reference to people of Japanese nationality.

**Josh Gibson:** American Negro league baseball catcher, considered to be among the best power hitters and catchers in the history of baseball, who played for the Homestead Grays and the Pittsburgh Crawfords. In 1972, he became the second Negro league player to be inducted into the National Baseball Hall of Fame, after Satchel Paige.

**Lard:** Pig fat that is rendered and clarified for use in cooking.

**Latch on:** To attach oneself to, or to understand.

**Lew Burdette:** American MLB starting pitcher who played primarily for the Boston/Milwaukee Braves, leading Milwaukee to its only title as Most Valuable Player in the 1957 World Series.



**Josh Gibson** in uniform for the Pittsburgh Crawfords.

**Measure up:** To be the equal of something, have similar quality, or to have the necessary qualifications.



**Mississippi River:** The chief river of the largest drainage system in North America, flowing from Minnesota to the Mississippi River Delta at the Gulf of Mexico.



Map of the **Mississippi River** and its tributary structure.

**Mobile:** The county seat of Mobile County, Alabama, United States, and the only saltwater port in Alabama.

**Outhouse:** An outbuilding containing a toilet, and typically lacking in plumbing.

**Penitentiary:** A place for imprisonment, reformatory discipline or punishment, often used in reference to a U.S. prison maintained by the state or federal governments for serious offenders.

**Pint:** A unit of liquid or dry capacity equal to one-half of a quart, often used alone in reference to a pint of beer.



An **opossum**.

**Pirates:** The Pittsburgh Pirates are an American professional baseball team based in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, founded in 1881, and which has won five World Series championships to date.

**Plumb:** Exactly.

**Pneumonia:** Lung inflammation caused by bacterial or viral infection, in which the air sacs fill with pus and may become solid.

**Possum:** An opossum, a tree-dwelling Australasian marsupial with a prehensile tail.

**Recruited:** To be collected or enrolled as a member in an organization or in support of a cause.

**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.

**Rubbish:** Waste material, refuse, litter, garbage, or trash.

**Satchel Paige:** American Negro league and Major League Baseball player who became the first player who had pitched in the Negro leagues to pitch in the MLB World Series in 1948 and noted for his large fan following.



**Satchel Paige**.

**Seniority:** The state or fact of being older or higher in position or status than someone else.



**St. Peter**, as depicted by Rubens.

**Sickle:** A short-handed farming tool with a semicircular blade, used for cutting grain, lopping, or trimming.

**Spikes:** Specialized shoes with thin, pointed pieces of material on their soles to enhance athletic performance.

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

**Sterilize:** To free something of bacteria or other living microorganisms.

**Stockings:** Close-fitting, elastic garments worn to cover the leg from the foot up to the knee or sometimes even higher, usually worn with mid-length skirts.

**Tallahassee:** The capital of the state of Florida, in the United States.

**Tarred:** Something, such as a roof, covered in a thick, oily material known as tar.

**Uncle Remus:** A fictional kind, old former slave and narrator of African American folktales compiled by Joel Chandler Harris.

**Union:** A state of being united or joined together, usually in reference to a labor force.

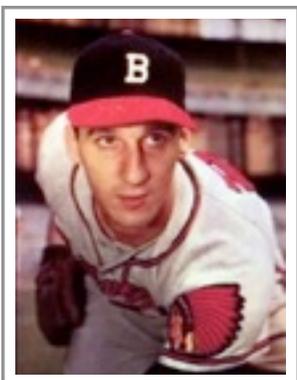
**Uppity:** Arrogant, pretentious.

**Vigilant:** Alert, attentive, observant, keeping careful watch for danger.

**Warren Spahn:** A Major League Baseball 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.

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

**Yankees:** An American professional baseball team based in New York City, New York that competes in Major League Baseball as part of the American League East division.



**Warren Spahn**, 1952.



**Wes Covington**.



## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS AND ACTIVITIES

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### Discussion Questions

1. Why do you think Troy discourages Cory from playing football? Provide at least three supporting details from the play.
2. Do you think Troy's children will repeat his mistakes? Why or why not?
3. Why does Rose decide to raise Raynell? What dreams have Rose sacrificed for Troy?
4. Do you believe that Troy took advantage of Gabriel's disability? Support your opinion with details from the play.
5. What is the symbolism of *Fences* as the title, and 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?
6. What were some of the issues and themes that you saw in the play? Do you think the issues of race represented within *Fences* are still relevant today?
7. Who was your favorite character the show? What did the actor do to portray this character on stage? Was this effective?
8. What was your favorite technical element of the show? How did the designers portray this on stage? Was their design effective?

### Activities

1. Troy does not want Cory to continue playing football, even though it is Cory's passion. Write a personal narrative about a time when you have been discouraged from pursuing something you love. How did you respond in the face of conflict? Did you continue to pursue your passion? Why or why not?
2. Write your own prologue for *Fences*, featuring Troy. Connect the prologue to one of the life events described by Troy, which are not shown in the the play.



3. Write a journal entry from ten years after Troy's funeral, from Raynell's perspective. Imagine what her life is like without the influence of Troy.

4. Imagine that you must give a eulogy at Troy's funeral. How would you describe his life and character?

#### 5. Building Fences

*Fences* includes significant social commentary about racial discrimination. Have your students build their own "fences" in order to raise awareness about current social issues about which they are concerned. Provide each student with a paper plank, or piece of the fence. Have them decorate it with current societal issues, put the fence together, and discuss the discoveries. Are certain issues repeated? Are there issues which do not appear on the fence? Is there anything that your students can do to help solve these social issues? Display the fence in order to provoke more discussion.

#### 6. One Minute Monologue

Have students free write for one minute on the topic of race and discrimination as presented in *Fences*, specifically focusing on their own opinions and how they are affected by these issues. Then have them edit their free write into a 60 second monologue to be performed for the class.